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ALEXANDRA KOLLONTAI

Selected Writings

with introduction and commentaries by ALIX HOLT



A Bolshevik leader—the only woman member of Lenin's government—speaks on revolution, socialism, and feminism.

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Alix Holt

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Contents

Translator's Note

The translations in this selection, with a few exceptions, appear for the first time in English. "Communism and the Family" was published in 1920 in **The Worker**, the paper of the Scottish Workers' Committee, and the same translation was republished by Pluto Press in 1971; the translation here is, however, a new one. "The Workers' Opposition" was published in 1921 in **The Workers' Dreadnought** on the initiative of Sylvia Pankhurst, and reprinted in 1962 by Solidarity. Although this early translation is sometimes unclear or ambiguous, no copy of the Russian original is available and I have therefore been unable to make a new translation. "Sexual Relations and the Class Struggle" was first published in my own translation in 1972, by Falling Wall Press.

Until the revolution, Russia used the old Gregorian calendar, which was thirteen days behind the Roman calendar: dates before and during 1917 are given according to the Gregorian calendar, dates after the beginning of 1918 according to the Roman calendar.

Chronology

1873	Alexandra Mikhailovna Domontovich born.
1878	Bestuzhevskii courses providing higher education for women opened in St Petersburg.
1881	Tsar Alexander II assassinated.
1884	Engels's **The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State** published.
1889	First congress of the Second International held in Paris.
1893	Alexandra Mikhailovna marries V.L.Kollontai.
1896–8	Kollontai engages in political work, teaching in workers' schools and helping political prisoners.
1898	**1–3 March**: Founding conference of Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party.
	August: Kollontai travels to Zurich to study political economy.
1899	Kollontai returns to St Petersburg but not to her husband.
1901	Kollontai visits Europe and meets Rosa Luxemburg, Paul and Laura Lafargue, Karl Kautsky and Georgii Plekhanov.
1902	Lenin writes **What Is To Be Done**.
1903	Kollontai speaks in public for the first time: to students on Nietzsche and morality.
1905	**9 January, "Bloody Sunday"**: Troops fire on peaceful demonstration.
	14 October: Petrograd soviet of workers' deputies established.
1907	**3 June**: Second Duma dissolved.
	17–19 August: Kollontai participates in international conference of socialist women in Stuttgart.
1908	**September**: Arrest warrant out for Kollontai for her book **Finland and Socialism**. Propaganda work in textile workers' union.
	13–14 December: Kollontai leaves for the West to escape arrest.
1909	**January**: Kollontai joins German social democratic party.
	April–May: Kollontai visits London with Clara Zetkin to take part in suffrage campaign.
1910	**28 August – 3 September**: Kollontai present at Eighth Congress of Second International.
	August–September: Kollontai speaks at meetings in Denmark and Sweden.
1911	**February–March**: Kollontai lectures in Bologna.
	Spring: Kollontai moves to Paris.

August–September: Kollontai active in the south of France during a wave of strikes by housewives.

1912 Kollontai visits Belgium, Sweden and Switzerland.

2–7 September: Kollontai attends Forty-fifth British Trade Union Congress in Newport.

24–25 November: Kollontai in Basle for international congress of Second International.

1914 **June:** Austrian ultimatum to Serbia.

3 August: Kollontai arrested by German authorities.

4 August: Kollontai released. Reichstag approves war credits.

Mid-September: Kollontai leaves for Denmark.

October: Kollontai moves to Sweden.

Mid-November: Kollontai in Swedish prison. After release at end November she settles in Norway. Writes first letters to Lenin.

1915 **September:** Zimmerwald conference, international gathering of socialists opposed to the war.

8 October: Kollontai begins a speaking tour of USA.

Kollontai now a member of Bolshevik party.

1917 **23 February:** Demonstration of women workers which begins "February Revolution".

March: Kollontai returns to Petrograd, and is elected a member of executive committee of Soviet.

4 April: Kollontai speaks at meeting of social democratic deputies in support of Lenin's April theses.

24–29 April: Kollontai at Seventh All-Russian party conference. Attempts unsuccessfully to raise question of the organisation of women.

3–6 July: Popular demonstrations suppressed by the government. Kollontai arrested.

26 July – 3 August: Sixth party congress. In absentia Kollontai elected member of central committee.

21 August: Kollontai freed.

September–October: Kollontai organises first Petrograd conference of working women.

25–26 October: Revolution. Kollontai is named Commissar of Social Welfare.

December: New marriage law.

1918 **January:** Under new marriage law Kollontai marries Pavel Dybenko.

6–8 March: Kollontai attends Seventh party congress, speaking against Brest-Litovsk treaty.

March: Kollontai resigns from Commissariat of Social Welfare.

1919	**January:** Rosa Luxemburg murdered in Berlin.
	July–August: Kollontai works as People's Commissar of Propaganda and Agitation of the Ukraine. Returns to Moscow in September and works in Central Women's Department.
1920	**November:** Abortion legalised.
	22–29 December: Eighth All-Russian Congress of Soviets. Kollontai elected member of VTsIK (All-Russian All-Union Central Executive Committee).
1921	**March:** Kronstadt uprising.
	8–16 March: Tenth party congress. Kollontai speaks for Workers' Opposition. New Economic Policy introduced.
	22–27 December: Ninth All-Russian congress of Soviets. Kollontai re-elected member of VTsIK.
	Marie Stopes opens birth-control clinic in London.
1922	**February:** Kollontai signs the "Letter of the 22" that put the case of the Workers' Opposition to the Executive Committee of the Communist International.
	4 October: Kollontai appointed adviser to Soviet legation in Norway.
1923	**30 May:** Kollontai given plenipotentiary powers in Norwegian legation.
1924	**January:** Death of Lenin.
	4 August: Kollontai appointed Ambassador to Norway.
1926	**September:** Kollontai appointed head of legation in Mexico; within a year she is recalled for health reasons.
	19 November: Laws on marriage, divorce, the family and guardianship passed.
1926–7	Joint Opposition opposes Stalin.
1927	**October:** Kollontai sent to Norwegian embassy.
	14 November: Trotsky excluded from the party.
	Wilhelm Reich's **The Function of the Orgasm** published.
1929	**February:** Trotsky deported.
1930	**January:** Women's departments closed down.
	Kollontai transferred to Swedish embassy.
1933	**7 March:** Kollontai awarded Order of Lenin for work with working and peasant women.
	Shlyapnikov (co-leader of the Workers' Opposition) expelled from the party.
1936	**27 June:** Abortion made illegal.
	August: Trials of Zinoviev and Kamenev.
1938	**July:** Pavel Dybenko shot. Massive purge trials.
1939	**November:** War with Finland begins.

1940 **January–March:** Kollontai active in concluding Finno-Soviet peace.
1942 **4 April:** Kollontai awarded Red Banner of Labour for services to Soviet state to mark her 70th birthday.
1945 **5 September:** Kollontai awarded second Red Banner of Labour for services during Second World War.
1952 **9 March:** Kollontai dies of heart attack.
1953 **5 March:** Death of Stalin.
1955 Abortion made legal.
1956 Twentieth congress of the Soviet Communist Party.

Introduction

In the Soviet Union today Alexandra Kollontai is usually remembered, if at all, as the proponent of the "glass of water theory", the theory that sex should be as easy and uncomplicated as drinking a glass of water. In the West, though in the past she was almost universally recognised purely for her "extreme views" and thought to be unworthy of the historian's attention, with the re-emergence of the women's movement at the end of the 1960s such assumptions have been treated with scepticism; feminists have recognised Kollontai as an important figure in their history, and attempts have been made at a more precise evaluation of her significance.

There are difficulties in studying any aspect of Soviet history, for material may have been suppressed and valuable documentation locked in closed archives; without new facts it is not always easy to penetrate the solid wall of accepted truths. However, many of Kollontai's articles and pamphlets had been published and deposited in foreign libraries before it was decided that the ideas they expressed were heretical; in fact in the Soviet Union, even though her views were considered dangerous enough to warrant distorted presentation, the themes touched upon were not considered central enough to necessitate the liquidation of her printed works or their removal to the secret vaults. In other words, it is possible to assemble nearly all of her published writings and it is hoped that the translated selection in this volume – most of these pieces have never been translated before – conveys the true flavour of Kollontai's political beliefs and activity and makes possible proper judgements.

It is more difficult, however, to collect biographical information in order to piece together a picture of the woman behind the writing since neither her diaries, except for a few excerpts, nor her letters, nor the voluminous memoirs she worked on in Sweden towards the end of her diplomatic career have been published or otherwise made available.

Alexandra Mikhailovna Domontovich was born on 1 April 1872, in St Petersburg. Like most of the women who were prominent in the Russian Social Democratic Party, she came from a family that was neither proletarian nor poor. Her father was a tsarist general from an old and noble line (it even included a saint) and her mother was

the daughter of a wealthy timber merchant. Her childhood and adolescence passed as it did for other girls of her background: the same round of country houses, summer excursions, parties and dances. Shura, as she was called, was groomed for the life of a lady of leisure.

Although, as her Soviet biographer has made clear, she was a sensitive child who by no means accepted the privileges of her social position without question – and Kollontai herself wrote in her diary, "From childhood I liked good living, but the knowledge that while I had my comforts others were suffering grieved me tremendously"[1] – she did not turn at an early age, as so many women in the Russian revolutionary movement had, to revolutionary theory as an explanation for the evils she saw around her or to revolutionary activity as her purpose in life. However, she did rebel against parental authority – not by leaving home or joining a socialist circle but by insisting on marrying a distant cousin, Vladimir Kollontai, in 1893. Her parents disapproved of this choice and were reluctant to give permission for the wedding, fearing that with only an engineer's salary the young man would be unable to guarantee their daughter the standard of living to which she was accustomed, and that the political views of a man whose father had been exiled might not be absolutely reliable. But they need not have worried on either score, for Vladimir Kollontai soon threw aside any romantic liberalism he might have had, and made an excellent career for himself which enabled him to support his wife in comfort. For five years, until the age of twenty-six, Alexandra was the engineer's wife, bringing up their son, keeping up her literary interests and enjoying the company of her circle of friends. She was a long time, complained her social-democrat friend Elena Stasova, deciding where she stood on political questions.

A visit in 1896 to the Krengol'mskaya factory near Narva, where her husband was working on a ventilation system, brought home to her the terrible conditions in which the working class lived, and the stirring example of the Petersburg textile strike later that year, which demonstrated to her "the development of a conscious proletariat in conditions of such complete oppression and inequality", persuaded her to take up her "allegiance to the marxists".[2] Convinced, however, that an allegiance based on an emotional commitment and on an acquaintance with the little illegal literature she could lay her hands on was not enough, she left St Petersburg in 1898 to study political economy at the university in Zurich. This departure marked the end of Kollontai's indecision, and from then on she devoted

her whole existence to the revolutionary cause, straining every emotional and intellectual nerve to respond to and define her positions on the problems facing the movement.

Her economics classes in Zurich brought her face to face with the most fundamental problem of all, which was eventually to split the social democratic movement: the problem of its concept of revolution. Kollontai had chosen to study under Professor Heinrich Herkner on the strength of his book **The Question of the Workers**, which she had read in its second edition. But by the time she arrived in Zurich, a fifth edition had already been published giving Herkner's revised ideas – he, like the contemporary German theorists, had opted for a reformist revision of Marx. It was clearly not sufficient to have an "allegiance" to marxism if marxism meant so many different things to different people. Kollontai defended the classical marxist positions, and neither the Professor nor the Webbs in England (which she visited in the summer of 1899) gave her any cause to change her mind. On her return to Russia that autumn, she wrote articles for the journal **Nauchnoye obozreniye** ("Scientific Review") attacking Bernstein, the most prominent of the revisionists, but tsarist censorship ensured that the article was never published. However, another similar essay, "On the Question of the Class Struggle", did see the light during the revolutionary days of 1905, when the authorities had to allow more open political debate. Kollontai, though never wavering in her orthodox interpretation of marxism, hovered uneasily between the two wings of Russian social democracy, working more closely sometimes with one, sometimes with the other. Her hesitancy to commit herself definitely to either Bolsheviks or Mensheviks should be seen not as evidence of her indecision or dilettante approach to political work but as a consequence of her desire to think each issue through and make up her own mind, and of the difficulties of achieving this laudable goal given the unfavourable conditions of clandestinity under which the revolutionary movement functioned.

In order to grasp the pressures and influences that led to the evolution of Kollontai's ideas it is necessary to know something of the milieu in which she moved and her personal response to this challenge, particularly since it is an interest in how women of the past became aware of their oppression and how they began to formulate their protest against it that in some large measure leads to the present interest in Kollontai.

Although the liberal bourgeoisie in Russia was sympathetic to

women's social and political aspirations – provided the women were of their own class and had no quarrel with society's basic institutions – the attitude of the authorities to any demand for women's rights was predictably aggressive. A women's conference held in St Petersburg in 1908 was referred to by the right-wing newspaper **Russkoye znamya** ("Russian Banner") as "simply a gathering of old and ugly ladies".

The paper continued: "Women in Russia should be concerned about the extension of only one right – the right to be a wife and mother and housekeeper. There were no normal women at the congress."

The working class also, steeped as it was in the ideology of the dominant class, did not always encourage or welcome the self-activity of women and was suspicious of political messages from the mouths of women. The trade unions, the organised might of the workforce, could show themselves at worst hostile and at best condescending and patronising. Even social democracy, the most highly developed political expression of proletarian class consciousness, offered a far from ideal environment for the woman activist. While theoretically accepting the need for the full emancipation of women, social democracy was in practice slow to take up women's issues, tended to view work among women as a waste of valuable resources and neither appreciated the difficulties that women in politics faced nor did much to help women gain confidence and play responsible roles in the organisation.

Because Kollontai believed that the liberation of women was only possible with the achievement of a socialist society, she remained within social democracy and fought for a greater understanding of the woman question. Such a decision demanded great courage, for it meant fighting deeply-rooted prejudices and it often meant fighting on one's own. Kollontai was to find herself for most of her life in both a political and a personal sense isolated and alone. Partly it was her desire to grasp issues fully and draw her own independent conclusions which prevented her for a long time from identifying with any group or faction within the Russian social democratic party, but undoubtedly it was also the difficulties women experienced in accepting themselves and being accepted as equals in political activity. Women had for so long been confined to their narrow world that though they might come to see the injustices which they and other sections of society suffered, they could not immediately comprehend the complex interconnections of the social organism as a whole and were thus not in a position to propose strategies and

theories. There were several educated and talented women in the Russian socialist movement but, like Krupskaya, they concentrated on secretarial or technical work and did not participate much in editorial boards or policy-making discussions. Kollontai's political career fits the broad pattern of women taking a back seat and not aspiring to the realms of theory or leadership, but it is the least typical in the pattern and in many ways transcends the usual boundaries.

After the revolutionary events of 1905, Kollontai worked with the commission of social democratic members of the "Duma" or parliament over the question of the relationship of Finland to the Russian empire; in September 1908, as a result of the appearance of her book **Finland and Socialism**, a warrant was issued for her arrest. In mid-December she left for the West in order to avoid arrest. She was to spend most of the period from then until the outbreak of the 1917 revolution abroad.

In January 1909 she joined the German social democratic party, and in April gave her first speaking tour in Germany. Later that month she visited Britain, together with Clara Zetkin, at the invitation of Dora Montefiore and the Adult Suffrage Society. At the second international conference of women socialists, in August 1910, Kollontai spoke on maternity protection, and she participated in other meetings that year in Denmark and Sweden. In February and March of 1911, she lectured on Finland and on the family at the party school organised by Lunacharsky and Bogdanov and held at Bologna. Later that spring, Kollontai moved to Paris; and by August she had become active in the south of France during a wave of strikes by housewives. From the summer to mid-November 1913, Kollontai was in London working in the British Museum, gathering material on maternity insurance.

On 3 August 1914, two days after Germany declared war on Russia, Kollontai was arrested by the German authorities, though she was released the following day. She left for Denmark in mid-September, then in October moved to Sweden. She spent from mid-November to the end of November in a Swedish prison; after her release she settled in Norway. It was at this time that she wrote her first letters to Lenin, and in 1915 Kollontai finally decided to join the Bolshevik party.

In the month following the February 1917 revolution, after the abdication of the tsar and the formation of the Provisional Government, Kollontai returned to Petrograd from western Europe and the USA, where she had gone in October 1915 on a speaking tour, and was elected a member of the executive commission of the Soviet. She was the only leading Bolshevik to support Lenin's April Theses at the time when they were first proposed. In the same month at the seventh all-Russian party conference she unsuccessfully attempted to raise the question of the organisation of women. In June she attended the ninth congress of the Finnish social democratic party, and later that month she spoke on the national and Finnish questions at the first all-Russian congress of Soviets. With the coming of the "July days" when popular demonstrations were suppressed by the government, Kollontai was arrested, like many leaders of the Bolshevik party. In her absence she was elected a member of the Bolshevik central committee and an honorary chairperson of the sixth party congress. On 21 August she was freed; and in September/October she organised the first Petrograd conference of working women. Immediately after the October Revolution, Kollontai was named Commissar of Social Welfare.

From her qualities of honesty and independence there followed a loneliness in personal life even amidst this turmoil of political activity. And when political isolation eventually came, this was even harder to bear. As she was leaving New York in 1916 after her American tour she wrote in her diary: "I'm not sorry to leave America. It's more a relief. But what lies ahead of me? Whom shall I meet? After all it's loneliness there for me too."[3] Later still, in 1927 when she was recalled from a diplomatic post in Mexico, she was to write to a friend: "I'm coming home though I haven't really got a home at all."[4] The male revolutionary usually had a wife and family which provided moral support and a refuge from the reverses and disappointments of political life. The women revolutionaries in most cases lived with other revolutionaries and had to expend energy creating havens of peace and quiet for their men which severely limited the scope of their own political activity; or else like Kollontai or Inessa Armand they were single women who were not called upon to provide but consequently did not enjoy the benefits of domestic warmth and security. However, in 1917

Kollontai had met the Bolshevik leader of the sailors of the Baltic fleet, Pavel Dybenko, and to silence the scandalmongers of the bourgeois press in January 1918 the two registered under the new marriage act that had been passed the previous month. Though Dybenko was seventeen years her junior and a man of peasant origin and little education, it was not these differences in age and background that eventually brought their relationship to an end but the problem of sexual stereotypes. "I am not the wife you need," she wrote to him in 1922: "I am a person before I am a woman. That puts it in a nutshell." In all the material that is available to us Kollontai is reticent about her private life, but it is clear that the relationship with Dybenko was a repetition of previous experiences. "Over and over again," she wrote in her 1926 autobiography, "the man always tried to impose his ego upon us and adapt us fully to his purposes."[5]

Thus from her own life Kollontai came to see that economic independence and a determination to choose partners freely did not automatically enable the woman to achieve perfect relationships with men. It was this sensitivity, drawn from her own experience, to the manner in which even the most intimate feelings of men and women were shaped by the society in which they lived that no doubt led her to speculate on the connection between personal relationships and social change, and to insist that socialists recognise the importance of this question in their politics. But the difficulties involved in incorporating women's experience of social relations and of their oppression in the proletarian world view proved too great for her to overcome. On the one hand the Bolshevik party at first made little response to Kollontai's tentative suggestions, thus depriving her of the opportunity of developing her ideas in debate, and then allowed the discussion to open up too late, at a time when the possibility of inviting anything better than a hostile attack with no right of defence was passing: and on the other Kollontai herself failed to meet the challenge of her environment and break down the barriers between her world and that other world.

In July and August 1919 Kollontai worked as People's Commissar of Propaganda and Agitation in the Ukraine; she returned to Moscow in September and worked in the Central Women's Department. Illness with typhoid and toxaemia the following year limited her

activity. In March 1921, at the tenth party congress, Kollontai spoke for the "Workers' Opposition", a tendency within the party which proposed the democratisation of industry through the trade unions. In June, at the second international conference of communist women she reported on forms and methods of work among women, and was elected a deputy of the International Women's Secretariat. In October 1922, Kollontai was appointed advisor to the Soviet legation in Norway.

Kollontai's experience in the Workers' Opposition seems to have been a decisive factor in her withdrawal from political life at about this time. Whereas in 1918, when she had disagreed with party policy on Brest-Litovsk,* she had been part of a large and influential faction and even in defeat had remained convinced that her arguments were correct, in 1921 and 1922 she was virtually alone among the leading Bolsheviks to take the stand she did, and she does not seem to have come through the experience with the same unshaken belief in her own ideas.

Soviet sources insist that Kollontai came to realise her mistakes and to regret deeply the part she had played in the Workers' Opposition. The French socialist Marcel Body, on the other hand, who worked with Kollontai at the legation in Norway, has written of a series of articles on the family which appeared in **Pravda** in 1923: these were signed "AMK" but in fact presented a crude distortion of Kollontai's views, and were placed there on Stalin's initiative to enable him to blackmail her into refraining from oppositional activity.[7] This version of events cannot be accepted as the truth for the simple reason that no articles signed "AMK" appeared in **Pravda** that year. But whatever Kollontai's exact state of mind at this stage, she had broken with the opposition and was showing no desire to go on fighting political battles. She is said to have been approached in 1926 by the Left Opposition but to have refused to join their ranks. Body is again our source of information, though in this case it is at least possible that he may be accurate. Kollontai had not renounced her criticisms of the party and its politics, but she no longer threw her energies behind her criticisms. She seems

* Whereas most of the party members who opposed the Treaty's terms did so because they wanted to continue the war as a revolutionary war against the German bourgeoisie and monarchy, Kollontai opposed it on the more specific grounds that it surrendered the Finnish working-class movement to severe repression.

to have lost confidence in her own political judgement and competence. She turned instead to the world of literature.

During her first few months in Norway she hardly went near the legation; she hid away in the village where she had lived during the first world war and wrote her stories. She dreamed of achieving her childhood ambition of becoming a full-time writer. In 1925 she wrote to a friend, Frederik Ström, that she had "just one wish – to become a free writer again, without an official position."

She had been made ambassador to Norway in August 1924, and though she asked to be transferred from diplomatic work, in September 1926 she was appointed head of the legation in Mexico. She was recalled from the post within a year out of consideration for her health, which had been affected by the heat and high altitude of Central America, but after a few months' rest in Moscow, in October 1927 she was sent again to the Norwegian embassy where she served for three further years. In 1930 she was transferred to Sweden where she remained until the close of the second world war.

Although most Soviet references to Kollontai emphasise her diplomatic career, the traditional secrecy surrounding anything connected with foreign policy means that very little detail of her work abroad has been so far made available. Both her own government and the governments of the countries to which she was sent appear to have considered her competent at her job. Her knowledge of the ways of high society and of the languages and literature of the world enabled her to tread diplomatic carpets with ease. Her sex might have proved a handicap, for diplomacy had always been a male preserve; but she displayed such a mastery of protocol and carried herself so well in her furs (she had always been noted for dressing well, sometimes to the chagrin of her comrades) that the Western press, after its first reaction of merriment and contempt at the ridiculous sight of a woman in an embassy, adopted a polite and respectful tone.

However, the anti-capitalist nature of the state they represented made life difficult for all Soviet diplomats, and Kollontai's international reputation as a revolutionary had not been forgotten. Plans to send her to work in Canada had to be dropped when the government of that country refused to harbour such a dangerous personage even as a diplomat, and both the US and the Cuban governments refused her permission to set foot on their territories when she was travelling out to Mexico.

There was one occasion when Scandinavia did occupy a central place in Soviet foreign policy. In 1939, anxious to better secure his northern borders by pushing them further back from Leningrad, Stalin staged an incident on the Finnish frontier and then proceeded to invade the country for violating treaty agreements. The behaviour of the Soviet Union did not seem to be governed by principles very different from those of the other Western powers, and the "winter war" appeared to have the character not of a struggle against the reactionary Finnish warmongers but of a plain act of aggression against the whole Finnish nation. Although we have no definite information on Kollontai's personal reaction to these events, it is hard to see how, as someone who had been so involved in the fight for an independent socialist Finland up to and during the revolution, she could have remained indifferent. And the evidence does suggest that she took as much initiative as was possible in those times to bring the hostilities to an end, and that she opposed plans to annex huge areas of Finnish territory. She succeeded in pressurising the Soviet government into offering an armistice, and in 1943, when the Finns wanted to withdraw from the war (which they had entered on the side of the Germans), they chose Kollontai as their mediator. The preparations for negotiations between the Finnish and the Soviet governments dragged on for many months and, exhausted by the nervous strain, Kollontai suffered a stroke which paralysed her left arm and leg. She nevertheless stayed at her diplomatic post until the Finnish delegation had left for Moscow for the talks.

The Finnish affair illustrates the problems of compromise and concession which the Old Bolsheviks who continued to function in high places in the stalinist period had to face, and Kollontai's diplomatic career shows the extent to which revolutionaries such as herself justified their acceptance of the stalinist régime by the occasional influence they might have on government policies, and by the opportunities which certainly existed for personal interpretation of central directives. It is likely that the particular psychological and other pressures that came to bear in Kollontai's case will never be fully documented, for although some indications may possibly be gleaned from the diaries, personal papers and correspondence currently buried in Soviet archives (we know, for example, that during her years in Stockholm she wrote lengthy autobiographical notes which were secretly copied by an NKVD agent and dispatched to Moscow),[8] her private thoughts were most probably never committed to paper. Kollontai was well aware of

what was going on in the Soviet Union: she knew that erstwhile colleagues were being tried for counter-revolutionary activity, and that personal friends were being sent to camps and shot; she herself packed her bags every year to take her holiday in the Soviet Union, wondering if a similar fate were not about to overtake her. She kept up a front of belief in the sincerity of the régime (according to Isabel de Palencia, the representative of the Spanish republic in Stockholm, she "spoke of Stalin, Molotov and Litvinov with deep admiration"), but it was a difficult one to maintain – Palencia describes the emotional crisis Kollontai went through when she heard of the Moscow trials. It may have suited her to be in a backwater where she did not have to confront in her daily work the realities of developments within the Soviet Union and the international communist movement, and where the strain on her emotional equilibrium was minimal. In Stockholm she could immerse herself in the world of diplomatic minutiae and avoid thinking about the big issues of the day – even with her closest companions she discussed only the everyday problems of embassy work, and never spoke of the past or the international present.

In April 1942, to mark her seventieth birthday, Kollontai was awarded the Red Banner of Labour for services to the Soviet state. At the age of seventy-three she retired from public duties and settled with her Swedish secretary into a two-roomed Moscow apartment the Soviet government awarded her. In September 1945 she was awarded a second order of the Red Banner of Labour for services rendered during the second world war, but otherwise the authorities left her in privacy and anonymity. In March 1952, in her eightieth year, Kollontai died of a heart attack, forgotten by the party and by the nation. It was 9 March, the day after International Women's Day, but the country's main daily papers were too absorbed with the session of the supreme Soviet and the state budget to mention Alexandra Kollontai's contribution to the revolution.

Since Kollontai's writings dealt with the problems of women, their exploitation and oppression under capitalism and the freedom they must struggle for and could realise with the establishment of socialism, they were too embarrassing to have had any place of honour under Stalin. They highlighted the gap between Soviet reality and socialism, and the extent to which ideas about the family

and equality had been distorted or discarded by the government; in so doing, they raised questions of the nature of Soviet society and the direction of its transformation. Kollontai's insistence on the necessity of introducing public services of every kind that would free men and women, especially women, from the petty cares of everyday life, her talk of more meaningful relationships between the sexes and of a new era of human understanding, love and trust were heresy in the grim period of the purges. As the ideal of the independent, politically active woman, relieved of the burdens of child-rearing and housework, was replaced by that of the mother-heroine whose contribution to the community and to socialist construction was the hours and months and years she spent in queues, cooking and keeping house and raising the younger generation, Kollontai's writings, which had previously been criticised by individuals rather than the party, were pronounced officially to be erroneous and then their very existence hidden from public view.

The enemies of the October revolution had seen Alexandra Kollontai as representing some of the more hideous and threatening aspects of Bolshevism. A woman who had left her husband, got herself educated and gone to join the social democratic movement offended against their sense of the correct ordering of things; more dangerously, she set herself up to attack very noisily and effectively the twin pillars of their life-style – private property and the family. In the 1920s members of the party who identified with the ideas of socialism in one country and were wary of "chaotic" and "disorderly" social transformation took many leaves from the book of counter-revolutionary polemic; Kollontai found herself labelled a "socialist intelligentsia philistine" (whatever that was supposed to mean), and her ideas dismissed as wild and totally incorrect. The whole debate on communist morality was carried out in such a manner that Kollontai's views became distorted beyond recognition, and even those who continued to fight for the goals of 1917 and opposed the increasing power of the bureaucracy accepted the official exposition of Kollontai's theories.

In recent years there have been modest Soviet attempts to reinstate Kollontai in the pantheon of the revolution. A biography first published in 1964 has been reprinted and two books of selected essays and articles by Kollontai have appeared,[9] though both in very small editions by Soviet standards. The decision to rehabilitate Kollontai reflects the wider interest the Soviet government has begun to take in questions concerning women, and this development, while to

some extent the result of the rise of the women's movement in the West, has its roots in changes within Soviet society. The wider interest, however, does not signal a return to earlier ideals and commitments. In the biography, for example, the usual method of Soviet historians is applied of removing the political content of political controversies, leaving merely a descriptive minimum that reveals the incorrectness of any person in opposition to the government's line. Kollontai's attention to the "woman question" can hardly be avoided, and indeed it has never been doubted that women should play a large role in the labour force; but with careful censorship of her vision of the elimination of the domestic economy, contemporary reality can be shown to correspond more or less to the goal that was set at the beginning. Her ideas on love and sexual relations are briefly discussed, but are trivialised so that it can be said that they are accepted now as axiomatic. As for her views on the family, they are not divulged; it is merely stated that Lenin, Krupskaya and Lunacharsky were in favour of the nuclear family and that "Fifty years have passed . . . and with every day the huge role played by the family becomes clearer, above all because it is a great factor in the formation of the soul and consciousness of the child."[10] The editors of the selections have overcome the problem of Kollontai's unwelcome ideas on the family and communist morality by omitting any articles or essays, or parts of articles or essays, that deal directly with these subjects.

In the Soviet Union the truth of Kollontai's insistence that the abolition of the bourgeois form of the family had to be accompanied by sexual liberation has been well understood by those in power, and her writings edited accordingly. However, the experience of Western countries has shown that relatively more enlightened and permissive attitudes towards sexual questions can be tolerated without threatening the bourgeois family, and by providing an outlet for energy and frustrations they can in fact assist in stabilising the social system of which the bourgeois family is an important prop. It seems that the Soviet régime is considering the advantages of staging its own sexual revolution along these lines. Back in 1970 an article "Problems of the family and everyday morality in Soviet sociology in the 20s" appeared in the journal **Sotsial'nye issledovaniya** ("Social Research"). The choice of subject was novel, as was the detailed and sympathetic exposition of Kollontai's views on sexual relations. The author, V.Z.Rogovin, writes approvingly of her many-faceted, complex and serious Eros and wonders

ingenuously why so many of her contemporaries did not sufficiently understand her moral-ethical ideal. However he writes nothing, either approvingly or otherwise, of Kollontai's views on the family; he makes it clear in another part of the article that there has been much confusion over this issue, that "certain marxists" have been led astray and, like the utopian socialists, "consider that free love could only be achieved by the complete replacement of family education with social education in the communist society."[11] He just fails to mention that the "certain marxists" who looked to social education included both Marx and Engels, and that they had both spoken of other tasks now performed by the family which would be abolished in the future. Divorced from their dependence on the evolution of the family, Kollontai's writings on love can be used by Soviet writers as a safe historical reference-point in present debate: in an article published on 14 April 1976 in **Komsomolskaya pravda** ("Komsomol Truth"), the prominent Leningrad sociologist S.Golod gives Kollontai's "Make Way for Winged Eros" an honourable mention as an early work that recognised the need for relations based on psychosexual attraction.

But for Soviet women, Kollontai has significance today not merely as an example inspiring heroic deeds, as a symbol of the best traditions of the revolution and a reminder of what women can do when they try, but as the only member of their Communist Party who ever wrote anything more than the odd leaflet or article explaining marxist ideas on the question of women's liberation, and above all as a marxist who pointed to the central importance of the family in society and of its abolition for socialist change.

Some of the polemics in which Kollontai was involved may now seem irrelevant; bourgeois feminism is, for example, no longer an influential organised force. But Kollontai's criticisms of political approaches to women's issues that do not challenge the basis of the social system still have relevance. Similarly, although there is now a greater awareness than fifty years ago of women's special oppression, Kollontai's arguments within the party for some form of separate organisation of women remain topical. Besides defining the nature and aims of the women's movement, for nearly twenty years she agitated within international and Russian social democracy for women's issues to be taken more seriously, and she tried to

expand the concept of "women's issues" to include the family and personal politics. The work of Alexandra Kollontai represents the most important contribution of its period to the development of the relationship between the women's movement and the socialist programme, and her contribution to this long-neglected area of marxist theory deserves to be more widely known and appreciated.

1

Social Democracy and the Woman Question

It was not easy for Kollontai to win for herself a position in life from which she could independently analyse and comment on events: she had the handicap of being a woman in a world where such roles for women were not recognised. When she went to a newspaper office to collect the manuscript of one of her first articles, the editor asked in surprise why her father, whom he presumed to be the author of the article, had not been able to come in person. On occasions she was met with open and very decided hostility. In 1917 Pitrim Sorokin, the sociologist who was later to settle in the United States, wrote in his diary:

> "Yesterday I disputed at a public meeting with Trotsky and Madame Kollontai. As for this woman, it is plain that her revolutionary enthusiasm is nothing but a gratification of her sexual satyriasis. In spite of her numerous 'husbands' Kollontai, first the wife of a general, later the mistress of a dozen men, is not yet satisfied. She seeks new forms of sexual sadism. I wish she might come under the observation of Freud and other psychiatrists. She would indeed be a rare subject for them."[12]

It is hardly surprising that so few women chose to swim against the tide of public opinion and lay themselves open to such abuse, or that so few of the few who were brave enough rose to prominence in their chosen fields.

The difficulties women faced were not entirely external. In her 1926 autobiography Kollontai notes that her domestic education made her for many years an extremely shy person, unsure of herself in the company of others. She was later to tell women workers in Leningrad how, the first time she spoke in public, she had to hold on to the back of a chair to prevent herself from stumbling in her nervousness. She admits that when she finally came to reject the role that birth and upbringing had prepared her for, and to leave her husband and child in order to study and equip herself for the life she wanted to live, she was unable to bear herself in the heroic

manner and spent much of the train journey to Zurich in tears of anxiety.

Although Kollontai as a young girl and a young wife had experienced all the difficulties of being a woman, she did not address herself to the woman question during her first seven years in the revolutionary movement. Her upbringing had been that mixture of tyranny and affection specially reserved for little girls, and for not-so-little girls – at one point in their efforts to break her determination to marry Vladimir Kollontai, her parents had refused to allow the young man into their house. For Alexandra, marriage-for-love had become an issue of great importance. (She had seen both her step-sisters take husbands "for convenience"; the elder, Adel', had married a wealthy man forty years her senior for the sake of a secure position in high society, and the second sister Zhenya, who had become an opera singer, was forced to marry to protect herself from the advances of male admirers, whom the unattached woman on the stage could not hope to avoid.) She married as she pleased, but discovered that exercising freedom of choice in such matters did not solve all the difficulties, for it did not guarantee that the ideas and interests of two people would always remain compatible, nor did it solve her problem of trying to study at the same time as looking after a young son. But though her experiences as a woman were important in bringing her to question the necessity of the social system in which she lived, the comment she made in the last years of her life, that "women and their fate occupied me all my life and concern for their lot brought me to socialism", must not be interpreted to mean that from the very first she translated her criticisms of woman's position in society into a programme of political action. It is significant that her first article to be published,[13] which deals with the ideas of the Russian democrat Dobrolyubov on the environmentally determined nature of the child's personality, does not once touch on the question of male/female personality characteristics, though such a discussion would have been very appropriate. In her early social-democrat days Kollontai was writing about Finland, lecturing on Nietzsche and getting involved in general underground activity. It was in 1905 that she realised for the first time "how little our party concerned itself with the fate of the women of the working class and how meagre was its interest in their liberation",[14] and all the evidence suggests that until this time Kollontai herself was little concerned with the fate of working-class women. It was no coincidence that her realisation

should have come in 1905, for it was with the retreat of the government before the rising popular unrest that the possibilities of organising working women became real. Once Kollontai had made the connection between women's subjugation and political action, she was quick to draw all the conclusions. While the response of the social democrats in general was limited to addressing leaflets to working women as well as to working men, she argued that the situation demanded much more than token gestures, and began to explore methods of political work that might bring the mass of women into the revolutionary struggle.

As elsewhere, the development of capitalism was accompanied in Russia by the introduction of female labour on a wide scale. By 1908 twenty-five per cent of women in the towns were out at work, and in some industries female labour predominated: in the cotton industry at that time 171,000 of the total workforce of 201,000 were women. Although they had plenty to complain about, the women workers found it more difficult to find their bearings and fight for their rights than the men. Although over six million women, excluding those engaged in the peasant economy, were shown by the 1900 census to be independent wage-earners of some kind, a 1905 survey calculated that only 103,800 women worked in factories under the jurisdiction of the factory inspectorate: in other words, the majority of women were employed either as servants, or – if they were involved in production – as seamstresses, craft-workers and so on, working at home or in small workshops. The women who did work in the factories were concentrated in specific industries such as textiles or food-processing, or in lower-paid jobs where with no tradition of struggle and a rural past of submission and resignation they tended to accept their situation. Most women had husbands and families to cook and fend for too, which left little time or energy for trade-union work and politics, even if traditional values had tolerated their participation in such activity. Nevertheless, despite the many obstacles obstructing their path, the women of both town and country had participated in the revolution of 1905.

In her book **Towards a History of the Working Women's Movement in Russia** (pp. 39-58), published in 1920, Kollontai traces the development of political consciousness among women and the efforts of a few social democrats to encourage this growth and to integrate the struggles of women in the politics of social democracy.

Her account is to some extent impressionistic and simplistic. Some points are not satisfactorily developed – what did it mean, for example, for women to bring up their own demands only when this would not have harmed the common cause? But in this essay Kollontai is clear on a very important point: the social democrats fighting for a socialist approach to the woman question had to fight on two fronts, they had to fight inside the party as well as outside. On the one hand there was the threat posed by the bourgeois feminist organisations which began to appear as the middle class in Russia expanded and began to seek a political voice. These organisations fought in the manner of the much larger and more influential feminist groups in other Western countries for property rights, legal equality and above all for the franchise; they saw themselves as standing above class society and as fighting for the rights of all women and so aimed at winning women of the working classes to their banner. On the other hand, neither the labour movement nor the social democrats sufficiently recognised the specific oppression of women or became aware of the political tasks that this imposed. They were hostile to the suggestion of work amongst women; consequently, much attention needed to be directed towards persuading the working-class organisations to take a more positive view.

It has been suggested that only the fear of being outflanked by the feminists induced the social democrats to take up the woman question, and that therefore their espousal of the cause represented political opportunism rather than any real commitment to the liberation of women. Kollontai did not take this view; she saw social democratic attitudes as deriving from "prejudice" rather than any fundamental incompatibility between socialism and female emancipation. There was a history of organisation among women – of which she was apparently unaware – which gives weight to her arguments about the fundamental compatibility of socialism and women's liberation, but suggests that social democracy's negative response to the woman question cannot be neatly explained by the reference to "prejudice" alone. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, efforts had been made to draw women into trade unions and to establish circles of seamstresses and tobacco workers that would act both in the industrial and political sphere; in some areas, in the period before 1905, women's discussion groups had been functioning within the social democratic organisations. Obviously with women so overburdened by work and so steeped in

the relics of peasant custom, success could only be slight, and it was not until 1905, as Kollontai noted, that women began to acquire confidence and to make their presence felt in the political arena.

There can be no doubt that individual members of the party were unsympathetic, and aggressively so, to the attempts to organise women. Other sources can confirm that Kollontai's bitter words in **Towards a History** did not reflect personal conflicts or antagonisms rooted in other political differences. Her account, in fact, soft-pedals the sexism of individual party members, for she mentions only in very general terms an incident she was to recount in an autobiographical essay published in 1921. In the spring of 1906 she had tried to set up a "Women Workers' Bureau", but when the women involved arrived at the room booked for their first meeting, they found the hall locked and a notice on the door which read: "The meeting for women only has been called off; tomorrow there will be a meeting for men only." But it was not accidental that as the pace of revolution quickened, the "prejudice" of the social democrats to the woman question seemed to grow. Out of the upsurge of popular discontent arose new theoretical problems, the central one being to determine the nature and tasks of the current stage of the Russian revolution. Different evaluations of the extent to which the Russian revolution would diverge from the classic models of bourgeois revolution led to the advocacy of different policies towards the bourgeoisie and its political parties, and since at that time the politically articulate women were those of the bourgeoisie the attitude to the woman question became caught up in the sensitive area of social-democratic debate on the bourgeois/socialist content of the revolution. However although hostility to bourgeois feminism was consistent with the political philosophy of Lenin's followers, it was not subjected to close political examination and remained a mixture of good tactics and bad attitudes. The Bolsheviks failed to make clear in their minds the political significance of women's demands; the nagging suspicion that all activity by women was somehow bourgeois feminism influenced party attitudes up to and even after 1917. All this made Kollontai's campaign of enlightenment harder to wage.

It is important to understand the context of the political problems which social democracy encountered after the failure of the 1905 revolution. Especially fierce was the debate over the socialist deputies in the Duma, the "parliament" which the Tsar had conceded. One wing of the party advocated co-operation with the left

wing of the bourgeois parties, while another demanded the total withdrawal of the socialist deputies. These different positions implied different attitudes to bourgeois feminism; this became very evident in 1908, when the first all-Russian women's congress was held.

The St Petersburg committee of the Social Democratic Party at the time was dominated by the "ultimatists", a tendency within the Bolshevik faction which, while not advocating recall of the deputies, demanded a very uncompromising policy towards participation in the Duma, and whose attitude towards participating in conferences convened by the bourgeoisie was likely to be anything but enthusiastic. Kollontai managed to win permission to conduct a pre-congress campaign, and organised a small group of working women; but the committee was still in two minds as to whether or not an intervention at this type of conference was necessary or desirable. The hard-liners were in favour of withdrawing the support they had given to Kollontai's efforts, and drafted a leaflet warning working women to have nothing to do with the congress. Although Kollontai was successful in preventing the distribution of this leaflet, the committee delegated to lead the working women's contingent two women whose plans were in line with general ultimatist policy, i.e. to issue a strongly worded statement at the opening of the congress and then withdraw immediately.

The action of the St Petersburg committee on this occasion thus stemmed not from hostility towards the liberation of women but from their general political concepts.

Kollontai seems to have been unaware of these political undertones to the debate on the "woman question" either at the time or later, when she was reviewing the past. In her 1921 "Autobiographical Essay", written for the journal **Proletarskaya revolyutsiya** ("Proletarian Revolution"), she implies that male hostility played a role in determining the attitude of the social democrats, but makes no mention of other possible factors.

This ignorance as to the way in which the question of women's issues fitted into the general party debate must have reduced the effectiveness with which Kollontai fought for her ideas. We know that from 1905 onwards she attacked on both the bourgeois feminist and the social democratic fronts; but with regard to the struggle within the party, we do not know the details of the battles and how they were fought. The discussions and arguments were verbal, and have not been recorded.

In The Social Basis of the Woman Question (pp. 58-73), a book of over four hundred pages giving detailed information on the position of women and the programmes and activities of the various women's organisations both in Russia and in the other European countries, Kollontai makes only a few scattered remarks about the problem of social democracy and the woman question. This work was published in 1909 after the manuscript had been lost and found somewhere between St Petersburg and Capri, whither Kollontai had sent it for Maxim Gorky to read and approve (it had been intended that the book should come out in time for the 1908 women's conference). Kollontai believed that since the struggle for women's liberation was part of the struggle for socialism, and since the social democratic parties were the instruments by and through which the masses would achieve socialism, women should work within rather than outside their sphere. This was the central message of the book, and it was the energy and skill with which Kollontai defended this thesis here and elsewhere in her work that gives her both historical and topical importance as a socialist writer. But then as now, such a presentation of the problem left many questions unanswered. She suggests briefly that once they have made a place for themselves within the party, women will be able to improve the party's performance; but she does not expand upon this point, making instead a series of statements which by glibly underestimating the problems preclude their discussion. Very little evidence is given to support the assertion that the social democratic parties were, in practice, fighting on women's issues, and in the case of Russia no substantial evidence whatsoever is offered. Kollontai can only point to the decisions of international conferences at which Russian representatives were present, and cannot produce a single concrete example to prove her claim that the Russian social democrats were Russian working women's best friends.

This weakness of **The Social Basis**, its attempt to defend the indefensible, limited its effectiveness as a polemic against the feminists, for it made easy criticism possible at the level of practical performance, thus obviating the need for a discussion of Kollontai's theoretical premises. In a pamphlet which analysed the positions of the various political parties towards the women's movement Kal'manovich, a feminist with Cadet sympathies, spent much of her time attacking **The Social Basis** for presenting the workers' organisations as worthy defenders of women's rights. While it is clear from Kal'manovich's pamphlet that the "better society" of which she

was dreaming had nothing in common with socialism, and that Kollontai's account of feminism had been well within the bounds of realistic description, Kal'manovich's comments on the behaviour of the socialist parties cannot be dismissed as merely partisan. Certainly Kollontai, after a few years' close experience of Western social democracy, was to grow very critical of the socialist parties and not least of their efforts "in practice" to further women's liberation.

In order that Kollontai's writing may be seen in its proper perspective, its historical context must be emphasised. Large feminist organisations both in Russia and more particularly in other Western countries were entering the political arena and purporting to represent all members of their sex. The "woman question" was seen by them as the unfortunate result of an injustice of history that touched upon other issues such as education and the franchise, but which could be solved without challenging fundamentally the system of education or democracy. Feminism, then, was a political philosophy that sought the advancement of women's interests within the capitalist system, and in this sense its adherents saw the woman question as something that could be fought without reference to other social questions, and the women's movement as a separate movement. Hence socialist women at the time wanted to distance themselves from rather than identify with the word "feminism"; both Clara Zetkin and Alexandra Kollontai spent a great deal of time and energy insisting that there was no separate "woman question" and should be no separate women's movement. They argued that it was essential to bring women into politics and that special methods of work and special organisations for women were necessary, but that politics meant proletarian politics: the work and the special organisations must be organised by and be part of social democracy. They were responding to the urgent need to fight for the independence of proletarian activity in the face of the expanding influence of the bourgeois state and of bourgeois politics, and they were living in a time when social democracy was a mass movement and before it betrayed its revolutionary ideology.

The Social Basis of the Woman Question can thus be seen as an extension of the struggle against revisionism to the particular field of women's oppression. Kollontai's main aim is to show that despite the assurances of the feminists to the contrary, the divisions and alignments of class society are as applicable to the world of women as to the world of men, and that since the bourgeois women are

not prepared to challenge the system of capitalist production under which women's inequality is inevitable, the working-class women must maintain a politically separate identity. Kollontai goes out of her way to express her agreement with Bebel over the issue of the "united attack": co-operation, she maintains, can be useful, but not co-operation that involves the loss of independent proletarian initiative; the decision on when and how to co-operate must be taken on considerations of tactics, not of principle.

In her historical survey of the development of the feminist movement she shows herself sensitive to the changes in the social composition of its members, and more importantly to the altered circumstances in which bourgeois women found themselves and which led them to support more radical demands. It must be admitted, however, that such points are never at the centre of discussion, and most of the book appears to be written on the assumption that the bourgeois feminists will always and everywhere be the enemies of the working women. At one point she writes: "Ought the women of the working class to respond to the call of the feminists and take an active and direct part in the struggle for women's equality or, remaining true to the traditions of their class, should they go their way and fight by other means for the emancipation not of women alone, but of all humanity from the yoke of servitude imposed by modern capitalist forms of society?".[15] The bulk of the book takes this rigid framework of choice as given, and seeks to promote the second alternative. Kollontai's concept of class thus lacked sociological sophistication, and in her desire to discredit feminist accounts of the woman question she seems to have rejected the validity of demands for professional and educational equality as bourgeois demands which were not the immediate interest of proletarian women.

But more damaging to the power of her political message was her failure to develop criticisms of social democratic practice. One might have expected that with her emphasis on the independent and leading role of the working class, and with her fondness for spontaneity and self-activity, Kollontai would have developed this criticism. But without an understanding of the political conjuncture she could not hope to show where "male prejudice" ended and more general political considerations began, and could not theoretically substantiate her plea for socialist policies on women's issues. Kollontai was successful in overruling the suggestions of the ultimatists on the 1908 women's congress and in ensuring the participa-

tion of the working women's group, but in the period after the congress she did not manage to promote any constructive discussion on the lessons that might be drawn from that experience. The circumstances of Kollontai's flight and exile and the poor links with the party centres* were partly responsible for her failure, but her inability to argue her case in the context of the general problems of the Russian revolution was the more important factor.

The omissions of **The Social Basis** are obvious to the modern eye. However Kollontai's emphasis on the need for class analysis is as relevant now as then. It is its attempt to apply the concepts of class to the situation of women in society that gives **The Social Basis** its lasting significance. It goes beyond the abstract formulations of Bebel and Engels and brings the "woman question" into the realm of socialist politics.

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* Kollontai continued to consider herself a Menshevik, though the editors of the Menshevik paper **Golos sotsial-demokrata** ("Social Democratic Voice") made it clear in a specially written editorial note that they opposed her policy of independent activity for working-class women, while on the other hand the Bolshevik paper **Sotsial-demokrat** ("Social Democrat") had in early 1909 published a central committee resolution approving of the work that had been done for the conference and expressing itself in favour of the creation of special women's groups and women's political and trade-union organisations.

From

Towards a History of the Working Women's Movement in Russia

What point in time ought to be considered as the beginning of the women workers' movement in Russia? The movement of women workers is by its very nature an indivisible part of the general workers' movement; it is impossible to separate the one from the other. The working woman, as a member of the proletariat and a seller of labour power, moved with the working man every time he went into action to win his human rights. In all the risings and in all the factory riots which were so distasteful to tsarism she took an equal part, alongside the working man.

Thus the movement of working women begins with the first signs of an awakening class consciousness among the Russian proletariat and with the first attempts to achieve, by strikes and direct action, more bearable and less humiliating living conditions.

Working women played an active role in the unrest at the Krengol'mskaya factory in 1872 and in the riots at the Moscow Lazarev cloth factory in 1874; women were involved in the 1878 strike at the Novaya Pryadil'na factory in St Petersburg, and in 1885 they led the textile workers in that famous strike in Orekhovo-Zuyevo, when the factory buildings were destroyed and the tsarist government was forced to hurry through, on 3 July, a law banning night work for women and young people.

It should be noted that the spontaneous wave of strikes that roused the Russian proletariat to action in the 1870s and early 80s affected the textile industry in particular, where cheap female labour was always employed. The unrest of this period was, however, of a purely "economic" character; it was a response to a situation of unemployment and to the severe crisis in the cotton industry. Nevertheless it was indeed wonderful that the politically naive factory girl, hopelessly bowed down by harsh, unbearable work conditions, despised by one and all (even by the female half of the urban petty bourgeoisie, from whom she differed in her firm allegiance to the old peasant customs) should be in the vanguard, fighting for the rights of the working class and for the emancipation of women. The difficult living conditions with

which the independent wage-earning member of the proletariat had to cope were pushing the woman factory worker into open action against the power of the employers and against her enslavement by capital. In fighting for the rights and interests of her class the working woman was unconsciously paving the way for the liberation of her sex from those special chains that weighed upon it and were creating, even within the united working class, a situation of unequal status and unequal working conditions.

In the mid and late 90s, which was a period of increasing unrest among the proletariat, women workers also participated actively in the various disturbances. The "April Rebellion" of 1895 at the Yaroslav factory was carried out with the help and under the influence of the women weavers. The women workers of St Petersburg did not desert their comrades during the sporadic economic strikes of 1894-96, and when the historic strike of textile workers broke out in the summer of 1896 the women workers joined the men in a unanimous walk-out. What did it matter if for coming out on strike many of them were threatened with the sack, with a prison sentence or even with exile? The common cause of their class stood higher, was more important and more sacred than maternal feelings, domestic cares, or personal and family well-being.

At a time of unrest and strike action the proletarian woman, downtrodden, timid and without rights, suddenly grows and learns to stand tall and straight. The self-centred, narrow-minded and politically backward "female" becomes an equal, a fighter and a comrade. This transformation is unconscious and spontaneous, but it is important and significant because it reveals the way in which participation in the workers' movement brings the woman worker towards her liberation, not only as the seller of her labour power but also as a woman, a wife, a mother and a housekeeper.

In the late 1890s and the early years of the twentieth century there were many disturbances and a series of strikes in factories employing predominantly female labour: at the Shaishal tobacco factories, at the Maxwell spinning factories in St Petersburg etc. The working-class movement in Russia grew stronger and more organised. The female proletariat's opposition to the tsarist régime likewise grew. But until the great year of the first Russian revolution the movement was primarily of an economic character. Political slogans had to be hidden or presented furtively. A sound class instinct drew working women to support strikes, and often they were responsible for initiating and carrying out industrial action. But since women had as yet no sufficient organisation

or channels of communication, as soon as the wave of strike activity died down and the workers returned to work whether in victory or in defeat, the women would be scattered and isolated once again. In those days women in the illegal party organisations were few and far between. The broad objectives of the socialist party were still failing to attract the proletarian woman; she remained indifferent to political ideas, and did not believe in the possibility of her liberation as a worker or as a woman. The life of Russia's six million proletarian women was, in those early years of the twentieth century, one long round of hunger, deprivation and humiliation. The working day lasted twelve hours, or at the very least eleven. The women worked for starvation wages of twelve to thirteen rubles a month and they lived in overcrowded barracks. Neither the government nor society assisted them in times of illness, pregnancy or unemployment, and it was impossible to arrange a system of mutual aid because the tsarist government victimised without mercy any such organisational attempts on the part of the workers. Such was the lot of the working woman. Her shoulders were bent under the weight of an unbearable oppression. She could see only poverty and hunger ahead, and refused to believe in a brighter future, in the possibility of fighting to overthrow the yoke of tsarism and the yoke of capital.

Even in the early twentieth century the average working woman avoided politics and the revolutionary struggle. It is true that the Russian socialist movement prides itself on the number of great and heroic women through whose active work and self-sacrifice the underground movement was established and the way prepared for the expansion of subsequent years. But these women, from the first socialists of the seventies like Sofiya Bardinaya and the Leshern sisters, who had personal charm as well as great moral strength, to the iron-willed Perovskaya, were not from the proletariat. They were the young women Turgenev celebrated in his prose poem **On the Threshold**: girls of wealthy and aristocratic backgrounds who had left their parents' homes and broken with their past. In an attempt to atone for the sins of their fathers they took up the struggle against social injustice and "went to the people" with revolutionary propaganda. Even much later, when marxism had firmly established itself in the Russian workers' movement it was only the occasional proletarian woman who took part in political life. The active members of the underground organisations in those years were women of the intelligentsia, not working women. It was only rarely that a factory girl could be persuaded to attend an illegal meeting. Neither did working women visit the Sunday evening classes held on the outskirts of St Petersburg which were the only "legal

possibilities" in those times, the only way the broad mass of workers could make contact with the ideas of marxism and revolutionary socialism, presented under the guise of harmless lessons in geography and arithmetic. The working women were still avoiding life and struggle, believing that their destiny was the cooking pot, the washtub and the cradle. . . .

The first revolution: 1905

The picture changes swiftly once the red flag of revolution is hoisted high above Russia. The revolutionary year of 1905 had a profound effect on the working masses. For the first time the Russian worker sensed his strength and understood that the well-being of the nation rested on his shoulders. In the revolutionary years of 1905 and 1906 the woman worker also became aware of the world around her. She was everywhere. If we wanted to give a record of how women participated in that movement, to list the instances of their active protest and struggle, to give full justice to the self-sacrifice of the proletarian women and their loyalty to the ideals of socialism, we would have to describe the events of the revolution scene by scene.

Many can still remember those years, for they left vivid impressions; many can still recall those "grey" women beginning to come to life. The women listened to the orators at the packed meetings of the Gapon organisation,* their faces eager and full of hope and their hearts alight with enthusiasm. As they marched in the close ranks of the workers' processions their faces glowed with concentration, triumph, and firm determination. On that memorable Sunday, 9 January,† they were out in force. The sunshine was unusually bright for St Petersburg. It lit up the faces of the many women in the crowd. They paid dearly for their illusions and their childlike trust, for many women were among the victims of that January day. The call for a general strike reverberated around the workshops and was taken up by women who the day before had been deaf to politics. For many women this was the first taste of industrial action.

The working women in the provinces did not lag behind their comrades in the larger cities. During the October days, exhausted by their working conditions and their harsh hungry existence, women would

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* Workers' organisations whose origins lay in the police and whose leader, a priest named Gapon, was backed by liberal members of the tsarist régime.

† "Bloody Sunday", when troops fired on an unarmed demonstration outside the tsar's palace.

leave their machines and bravely deprive their children of the last crust of bread in the name of the common cause. The working woman would call on her male comrades to stop work. Her words were simple, compelling and straight from the heart. She kept up morale and imparted a renewed vigour to the demoralised. The working woman fought on tirelessly and selflessly; the more involved she became in action, the quicker the process of her mental awakening. The working woman gradually came to understand the world she was living in and the injustice of the capitalist system, she began to feel more bitter at all the suffering and all the difficulties women experienced. The voices of the working class began to ring out more clearly and forcefully for the recognition not only of general class demands but of the specific needs and demands of working women. In March 1905 the exclusion of women from the elections of workers' delegates to the Shidlovskii commission* aroused deep dissatisfaction; the hardships the men and women had been through together had brought them closer to each other, and it seemed particularly unjust to emphasise woman's inferior status at a time when she had shown herself an able fighter and a worthy citizen. When the woman chosen by the Sampsonevskaya factory as one of their seven delegates was ruled by the Shidlovskii commission to be ineligible for such office, indignant women workers from several different factories got together to present the commission with the following protest:

> The working women deputies are not being allowed to take part in the commission of which you are chairman. This decision is unjust. At the factories and places of manufacture in St Petersburg there are more women workers than men. In the textile industry the number of women workers increases every year. The men transfer to factories where the wages are higher. The workload of women workers is heavier. The employers take advantage of our helplessness and lack of rights; we get worse treatment than our comrades and we get less pay. When the commission was announced our hearts beat with hope: at last the time has come, we thought, when the women workers of St Petersburg can speak out to all Russia, and make known in the name of their sister workers the oppression, insults and humiliations we suffer, about which the male workers know nothing. Then, when we had already chosen our representatives, we were told that

* A commission, with elected workers' representatives, which the government instituted during the first weeks of the 1905 revolution to deal with the demands of the movement.

only men could be deputies. But we hope that this decision is not final. The government ukase, at any rate, does not distinguish between women workers and the working class as a whole.

Deprived of representation, women workers were shut off from political life at the moment when through the first state Duma the population had its first opportunity to direct the affairs of the country. This seemed a glaringly unjust move against the women who had borne the brunt of the struggle for freedom. Working women frequently attended the meetings held in connection with the elections to the first and second Dumas, noisily expressing their dissatisfaction with a law that prevented their voting over such an important matter as the selection of delegates to the Russian parliament. There were instances in Moscow, for example, where working women broke up meetings with their demonstrations of protest.

The majority of the forty thousand persons who signed the petitions sent to the first and second Dumas demanding that the franchise be extended to women were working women. This is evidence that working women were no longer indifferent to their lack of civil rights. The signatures collected by the bourgeois women's organisations, including the Union for Women's Equality, were from the factories. The willingness, however, of these women to sign petitions organised by women of another class shows that their political awakening had only made certain steps forward, and had stopped at a halfway point. The working women began to sense their inferior political status in terms of their sex, and were not yet able to connect this with the general struggle of their class. They had yet to find the path that would lead proletarian women to liberation; they still clung to the skirts of the bourgeois feminists. The feminists tried every means of establishing contact with the working women and winning them to their side. They attempted to gain their support and organise them in women's unions that were supposedly "above class" but were in fact bourgeois through and through. However, a sound class instinct and a deep distrust of "ladies" saved the working women from being diverted into feminism and from any long and permanent connection with the bourgeois feminists.

Women's meetings were especially numerous during 1905 and 1906. Working women attended them willingly; they listened attentively to the bourgeois feminists but did not respond with much enthusiasm, since the speakers gave no suggestion as to how the urgent problems of those enslaved by capital might be solved. The women of the working

class suffered from the harsh conditions at work, from hunger and insecurity. Their most urgent demands were: a shorter working day, higher wages, more human treatment from the factory authorities, less police supervision and more scope for "independent action". Such needs were foreign to the bourgeois feminists, who came to the working women with their narrow concerns and exclusively "women's demands". The feminists could not understand the class character of this embryonic working women's movement. The serving maids were a particular disappointment to them. During 1905 the bourgeois feminists in St Petersburg and Moscow took the initiative in organising the first meeting for servants. The response was encouraging and the first meetings were well attended, but when the "Union for Women's Equality" tried to organise servants according to its formula of an idyllic union of lady employers and their employees, the servants turned away and, to the chagrin of the feminists, transferred themselves rapidly to the party of their class, organising their own special trade unions. This was what happened in Moscow, Penza, Khar'kov and other towns. The attempts of the Women's Progressive Party, an organisation even further to the right, to bring together domestic servants under the watchful eye of their mistresses ended in the same way: the servants overstepped the limits set down by the feminists. Glance at the newspapers of 1905 and you will see how much information they give about the strikes and street demonstrations through which serving girls, even in the farthest corners of Russia, expressed their protest. The cooks, laundresses and housemaids either went on strike separately or they united under the common banner of "servants"; militancy spread from area to area like an epidemic. The demands were usually: an eight-hour day, the establishment of a minimum wage, better living conditions (the provision of separate rooms), more considerate treatment from employers etc.

The political awakening of women was not limited to the urban poor alone. For the first time the Russian peasant woman began to think in a stubborn and resolute way about herself. During the closing months of 1904 and all through 1905 there were continual "women's riots" in the countryside. The Japanese war gave impetus to this movement. The peasant woman, as wife and mother, felt all the horror and hardship, all the social and economic consequences of this ill-fated war. Though her shoulders were already weighed down by a double workload and a double anxiety, she had to answer the call for more food supplies. She, who had always been incapable of standing alone and afraid of everything outside her immediate family circle, was suddenly forced to come face to face with the hostile world of which she had been ignorant. She

was made to feel all the humiliation of her inferior status; she experienced all the bitterness of undeserved insults. For the first time the peasant women left their homes and their passivity and ignorance behind, and hurried to the towns to tread the corridors of government institutions in the hope of news of a husband, a son or a father, to make a fuss about allowances or to fight for various other rights. The women saw clearly and with their own eyes the ugliness of reality: they had no rights, and the existing social system was based on falsehood and injustice. They returned to their villages in a sober and hardened mood, their hearts full of bitterness, hatred and anger. In the south, during the summer of 1905, there was a series of "peasant women's riots". With an anger and boldness not usually expected from women the peasant women threatened the troops and the police and frequently gave the requisitioners a beating. Armed with rakes, forks and brooms, the peasant women drove the soldiers out of the villages. This was how they protested against the war. They were, of course, arrested, taken to court and harshly sentenced, but the unrest did not abate. These disturbances were in defence of general peasant interests and of specific women's interests – the two were so closely intertwined that it is impossible to separate them or to see the unrest as part of the "feminist" movement.

Besides the political protests there were others motivated by economic necessity. It was a time of general peasant unrest and strike activity over agricultural matters. The peasant women often took part, urging on their men or sometimes initiating activity. On occasion, when the men were reluctant to make a move, the women would go alone to the landlord's estate with their demands. And armed with what they could lay their hands on, they went out ahead of the village men to face the expeditionary forces. The peasant women, downtrodden by centuries of oppression, found themselves unexpectedly active and indispensable participants in the political drama. Over the period of the revolution they fought, in close unity with their men, in defence of the common peasant interests, and with amazing tact they brought up their own women's needs only when this did not threaten to harm the peasant cause as a whole.

This did not mean that the peasant women remained indifferent to or ignored their own needs as women. On the contrary, the mass entry of peasant women into the general political arena and their participation in the general struggle strengthened and developed their awareness of their position. In 1905 peasant women from Voronezh province sent two delegates to a peasant conference to demand "political rights" and "freedom" for men as well as women. Then there is the historic

letter sent by peasant women from the Voronezh and Tver' provinces to the first Duma. And the telegram from Nogatkino to the deputy Alad'in:

> In this great moment of struggle for rights we, the peasant women of the village of Nogatkino, greet those elected representatives who express their distrust of the government by demanding that the ministry resign. We hope that the representatives will support the people, give them land and freedom, open the doors of the prisons to liberate the fighters for the people's freedom and the people's happiness. We hope that the representatives obtain civil and political rights for themselves and for us Russian women, who are unfairly treated and without rights even within our families. Remember that a slave cannot be the mother of a free citizen. (Authorised by the seventy-five women of Nogatkino.)

The peasant women of the Caucasus were particularly militant in the fight for their rights. In Kutaisi province they brought forward resolutions at peasant meetings demanding that they be given equal political rights with men. There were women among the deputies to a meeting held in Tiflis province, where representatives from both the urban and the rural areas gathered to discuss the question of introducing the zemstvo* system into the Caucasus, and these women were insistent on the need for women's rights.

Alongside the demands for political equality, peasant women everywhere were naturally vocal in defence of their economic interests; the question of the allocation of land was as much a cause of concern for the peasant women as for their men. In some areas the peasant women warmly supported the idea of confiscating privately-owned land, but lost their enthusiasm when it seemed that women might not benefit directly from the redistribution. "If they take the land from the landowners and give it only to the men, that will mean absolute enslavement for us women," was their reaction. "At the moment we at least earn our own kopeks, but if they divide up the land like that we would be simply working for the men instead of the landowner." However, the fears of the peasant women were completely unfounded, because out of purely economic considerations the peasants were forced to demand

* The zemstvo was a local government organ initiated from below, usually by the local bourgeoisie; the tsarist régime permitted it to meet and make effective decisions, although it was not an officially recognised institution.

land for the "female souls" too. The agrarian interests of the peasant men and peasant women are so closely entwined that in struggling for the abolition of the existing oppressive land relations the peasants were fighting for the economic interests of their women. And at the same time the peasant women, while fighting for the economic and political interests of the peasantry as a whole, learned to fight for the special needs and demands of women. This was also true of the working women who fought unflaggingly in the general liberation movement, and who did even more than their country sisters to prepare public opinion to accept the principle of the equality of women. The realisation of civil equality for women in Soviet Russia was made possible by the spontaneous struggle of the masses of working and peasant women that came with the first Russian revolution of 1905.

In my book **The Social Basis of the Woman Question**, published in 1909, I had this to say to the bourgeois feminists (against whom my book was as a whole directed): "If, in the near future, the peasant woman wins a better position for herself, if the everyday conditions of her life improve and her economic and legal status is raised, this will be thanks to the unified efforts of peasant democracy directed towards the realisation of the general peasant demands which the rural community has constantly put forward. The attempts of the feminists to 'clear the way for women' are irrelevant here. . . . If the peasant woman can free herself from the existing agricultural relations she will have won more than all the feminist organisations together are in a position to give her."

These lines, written ten years ago, have been justified by events. The great October revolution has not only satisfied the basic and most pressing demands of the peasants of both sexes – that the land be given to those who were slaves of the land – but the revolution has raised the peasant to the respected status of a free and absolutely equal citizen, held back only by the outmoded forms of economy and the traditions of domestic life.

A world which the working and peasant women were only just beginning to dream about in the days of the first Russian revolution has been made reality by the great events of October 1917.

Bourgeois feminism and the question of women's political equality

The 1905 revolution brought forward and established the idea of equality for women. The question had never before and has never since been so heatedly debated in Russia, and never before nor since has

it assumed such an important position in the fighting platform of the various political parties. All the bourgeois groupings, from the Octobrists, the representatives of big business, to the petty-bourgeois Trudovik group, were grappling with the woman question, each party trying to settle the question on the basis of its particular programme, derived from its narrow class interests. The parties to the right of the Cadets, stood for limited franchise, especially when it was zemstvo autonomy that was being discussed; the Cadets, the Social Revolutionaries and the Trudoviki insisted on democracy, or rather on bourgeois democracy, in the shape of a five-tiered election that would guarantee a majority of petty-bourgeois representatives in parliament, and a bigger majority if women were included as voters. The "woman question" was debated everywhere: by the zemstva, a conference of liberals, the large Cadet unions and the first two Dumas.

This sudden interest in women's rights created favourable soil for the growth of bourgeois feminism in Russia. The first revolutionary storm gave birth to bourgeois women's political organisations, which tried to unite women of all classes under their narrow feminist banner. At first they trod cautiously, trying to find a way to participation on a large scale in the political life of the country. Before 1905 there had existed only the Russian Women's Mutual Aid Society, a women's club whose aims were philanthropic and modest in scope: to provide the opportunity for pleasant conversation, hostels for working girls from the intelligentsia and decorous meetings for its members, who were exclusively women of the bourgeoisie. Shabanova and Anna Pavlovna Filosofova were the leading lights of this group. The bourgeois feminists had also attempted to spread their ideas by the written word: in 1898 an annual "Women's Calendar" had been started (Praskov'ya Arian was the publisher), and from 1899 to 1901 a magazine, **Zhenskoye delo** ("Women's Affairs"), came out. But the censorship of tsarist Russia put a stop even to such innocent female ventures, for in furthering their ideas the feminists had to discuss methods of organisation – the most forbidden topic of all.

The revolutionary year of 1905 threw up new demands and opened up before Russian society (before "society" rather than before the working people) the unexpected possibility of struggling for the realisation of their class interests, and thus forced the women of the bourgeois classes to make a move. Alongside the Russian Women's Mutual Aid Society, whose moderate stand prevented it from taking any active part in political life, there appeared a more militant organisation, the Union for Equality. The society had a distinct Cadet flavour-

ing, with Tyrkova (a member of that party's central committee), L.Gurevich and Mirovich among its leaders, but was anxious to assure working women that it was "above class" and fought for the interests of women of all sections of the population. The Union started its own paper, **Soyuz zhenshchin** ("Union of Women"), and opened up branches all over Russia which by 1906 had more than eight thousand members.

The steady growth of women's political awareness, however, made a regrouping of social forces inevitable. The political bloc of bourgeois elements was possible at the height of the 1905 revolution, but had by 1906 become too confining even for the feminists. As the political consciousness of the feminists increased, different factions emerged more distinctly (the same process was evident in the male organisations), and despite the call for a united women's movement a split reflecting the different levels of political radicalism was soon an established fact. The bourgeois women's bloc came to an end a little while after its male counterpart had disintegrated.

By the spring of 1906 the right-wing feminists in the Union for Equality had broken from the bloc. They were closer in spirit to the advocates of "law and order", and as politically weak and formless as the diehard right-wingers grouped around **Zhenskii vestnik** ("Women's Herald"), the paper edited by M.Pokrovskaya. More radical elements formed a separate group, the Women's Political Club, which was however closed by the police at the time of the dissolution of the first Duma. The women in this club, though less moderate than the members of the other organisations, could not explain to themselves, let alone to others, what class they represented and what they considered as their main objectives. They were unsure whether they should defend the interests of factory women, peasant women or working women in general, and whether they should pursue exclusively feminist aims or involve themselves in more general political questions; shuffling indecisively between these alternatives, the club was doomed to a short existence. When, for example, the question arose of presenting a petition to the first Duma demanding an extension of the franchise to include women, the members of the club could not make up their minds to which political party they were closest and ended up by sending their petition to the Trudovik group.

I have deliberately dealt in some detail with the bourgeois feminists during the period of the first revolution because in those years the bourgeois women's movement posed a serious threat to the unity of the working-class movement. Not only the working women, who were just awakening to political life and searching for a way to their

liberation, but the organised and experienced social democrats too were captivated by the novel and (in the Russian context) militant slogans of the feminists.

During 1905 and 1906 the poison of feminism infected not only the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries but even some active Bolsheviks. At the first large women's meeting held on 10 April 1905 at the Tenishevskaya Institute in St Petersburg, only two speakers (one of whom was a working woman) dared to raise a voice of dissent against the friendly choir of representatives from the various social groups and political parties. We who were opposed to any bloc with the bourgeois feminists, however temporary, warned the working women against being carried away by feminism and called on them to defend the single revolutionary worker's banner. But the resolutions we put forward outlining principles of proletarian class unity and emphasising the necessity of a joint struggle for the common interests of working people were decisively defeated.

In those days the position now accepted without question – that in a society based on class contradictions there is no room for a women's movement indiscriminately embracing all women – had to be fought for fiercely. The world of women is divided, just as is the world of men, into two camps: one is in its ideas, aims and interests close to the bourgeoisie, the other to the proletariat, whose aspirations for freedom incorporate the complete solution of the woman question. Thus the two groups, even though they share the general slogan "women's liberation" have different aims, different interests and different methods of struggle. Each of the groups instinctively represents the interests of its class, and this gives a specific class bias to their aims and their actions. The individual woman may rise above and reject her own interests in the name of the victory of another class; a woman's organisation, however, will reflect all the needs and interests of the social group it represents. For the feminists, the battle to obtain equal rights with men within the limits of the capitalist world is a sufficient aim in itself; for the women of the proletariat this is only a means of extending the struggle against the economic oppression of the working class. The feminists consider that men, who have unjustly taken all the rights and privileges for themselves and left women in prisoners' chains and with a thousand obligations, are the main enemy, and that victory will be the abandonment by the male sex of their exclusive prerogatives. The women of the proletariat see the situation very differently. They certainly do not see men as the enemy or the oppressor. For them, the men of the working class are comrades who share the same joyless

existence, they are loyal fighters in the struggle for a better future. The same social conditions oppress both the women and their male comrades, the same chains of capitalism weigh on them and darken their lives. It is true that certain specificities of the contemporary situation create a double burden for women, and the conditions of hired labour sometimes mean that the working woman is seen as the enemy rather than the friend of men. The working class, though, understands the situation.

Access to the ballot box and the deputy's seat is the true goal of the feminist movement. And the more politically conscious of the working women are aware that neither political nor legal equality can finally settle the "woman question". As long as a woman has to sell her labour power and suffer capitalist slavery, she will not be a free and independent person, she cannot be a wife who chooses her husband only as her heart dictates, a mother who does not need to fear for the future of her children. The women of the proletariat thus aim to break the antagonisms of the class world and to win another and better society, where there will be no place for the exploitation of one person by another.

Women will only become free and equal in a world where labour has been socialised and where communism has been victorious.

The first attempts to organise working women along class lines

In the years of the first revolution the bourgeois feminist propaganda of "the one and indivisible women's movement" was still a serious threat to the cohesion of the workers' movement. The "left" feminists, in particular, who were fond of revolutionary phrases and sought the support of the social democratic women, could have presented a danger.

Conscious of these dangers on the one hand, and aware, on the other, of the new aspirations of the working women, which up till that time had failed to attract the direct attention they deserved from the party, a group of social democrats composed of both Mensheviks and Bolsheviks (an official merger of the two factions had taken place at that time) decided to take the question of the organisation of working women in hand. This group included Marusya Burko (a tailoress), comrade Antonova (a weaver), comrade Anna Semenova (a textile worker), comrade Solov'eva (a typesetter) and myself. (We were later joined by Klavdiya Nikolayeva and several others.)

In 1905 individual members of this group had carried out an open campaign against bourgeois feminism, speaking at meetings,

explaining to the working women the ideas of revolutionary marxism on the woman question and the problems of working women. From the spring of 1906 this group worked to draw the attention of the party to the demands and needs of working women, insisting that in order to attract women of the working class into the party and the trade-union movement special agitation was necessary.

An attempt to begin special agitation and propaganda amongst working women was, however, met by some members with indifference and by others with distrust. During 1906 and 1907 the party centre was engrossed in its serious and urgent political tasks, and although in principle it recognised the usefulness of this kind of work, it did nothing to help or support the work of the group. The rank-and-file comrades often did not grasp the meaning of what we were doing, and identified our activities with the "hated feminism". They gave no encouragement and even went as far as trying to hinder the group. Working women arranging their first meetings, for example, and relying on using the rooms where evening classes were held or where some union or club had its headquarters, would find that the building was locked up, and on making enquiries would be told that the rooms were not to be had for special women's meetings.

Such an attitude was based on an easily understandable fear that the working women might leave their class movement and become entangled in the snare of feminism. But in consequence we had to cope with a considerable amount of confrontation with comrades, and the development of extremely necessary work was impeded. Nevertheless, in 1906 we managed to hold a number of meetings outside the Neva gates. These gatherings were usually of a semi-legal character: twenty-five to thirty women would pose as a "meeting of representatives" at the union administration building or, less frequently, assemble at a Sunday school for a "lecture" which had the permission of the authorities.

By the spring of 1907 the movement among working women was already of such a distinctly mass character that socialists decided to reply to the bourgeois feminists by calling their own meetings. Those organised at the Nobel' house that spring played an important part in the development of the working women's movement, marking for the women of the proletariat a step along the path to class self-determination. These were the first meetings which the party organised for working women and at which the women themselves spoke. The atmosphere was electric, the large hall full to overflowing. Members of the textile and needlewomen's unions, typesetters and workers from many enter-

prises on the Vyborg side were among those to attend and follow the speeches with rapt attention. The questions of the labour protection of women and children, the security of maternity, political equality and the attitude of the revolutionary workers' party to the feminist movement were discussed. The feminists, significantly, did not dare send their representatives; the line of division between the feminists and the growing women workers' movement was now more clearly drawn.

One of the meetings coincided with a strike at a large factory on the Vyborg side, and was quick to show its solidarity with the strikers and to protest against the yoke of capital. The police hurried to restore order and ban these "women's meetings", to which the authorities, accustomed to the moderation and "good sense" that prevailed at the gatherings of the bourgeois feminists, had at first turned a blind eye.

It was then, in the spring of 1907, that the decision was taken to make use of the "legal opportunities" that existed for carrying out agitation and propaganda among the broad masses of working women.

In the spring of 1906 the left feminists around the Women's Political Club had established four clubs for working women in different parts of St Petersburg. The club on Vasilii Island was particularly active, and continued to function semi-legally even after the Women's Political Club had been closed. Working women clung firmly to this form of organisation, and clubs and societies of "self-education" flourished.

However, the general clubs and organisations had very few women members: out of six to nine hundred members, little more than a dozen were working women. It was, as usual, the lack of political consciousness and the backwardness of the women that restrained them. The group which had begun special work among the women of the proletariat decided to make use of this legal possibility, and with the help of club propaganda attract the more backward of the working women.

In 1907 the socialists managed to get permission to open their first club, which was to have the extremely innocent title of "Society of Working Women's Mutual Aid". The rules of the club laid down that while membership was open to men, only women were to be involved in the running of it. The aims of the club (not mentioned in the statutes, of course) were to prepare the ground for socialist work among the population, to encourage the workers' self-activity, to strengthen their revolutionary militancy and to bring together the isolated working women and draw them into the trade unions and the party.

During the winter of 1907–08 lectures were read, discussions and meetings held. The club had its own reading room and an inexpensive

buffet serving tea and sandwiches. In the summer a "colony" was organised, affording the working women most in need of rest the opportunity of being in the countryside, even if only for a few weeks. The "colony" was financed by the pooled resources of the participants. The male members also took part in this scheme, and generally speaking the society did not bear the stamp of a specifically women's club. During the first months of its existence the club on Predtechenskaya Street attracted more than three hundred members, one hundred of whom were working men. The club was situated near the textile workers' union headquarters and there was a lively exchange between the members of the two organisations. The women who joined the club were mainly textile workers, weavers and knitters, but domestic servants, seamstresses and workers' wives also become members.

The women who had initiated the special agitational work among proletarian women concentrated entirely on work in the club. They arranged lectures and – when the police gave permission – meetings, including meetings for women delegates from the various trade unions. They also carried out agitation in the party districts. The group became particularly active after the first International Conference of Socialist Women that took place in Stuttgart in 1907, and at which the author of these lines was the Russian representative.

In the years of reaction this, the working women's first club, was closed down by the police. But its achievements were lasting. The club on Predtechenskaya Street had laid the foundations of revolutionary class propaganda among the broad mass of Russian proletarian women.

The working women and the feminist conference

The winter of 1907 thus marked the beginning of separate party work among the women proletariat, aimed at bringing working women into the revolutionary movement. Differences with the bourgeois feminists became increasingly pronounced; the more obvious the "Cadet spirit" of the Union for Equality, the more rapid the desertion from that organisation of the working women, who had been unsure and hesitant. By the end of the winter, relationships between the feminists and the organised women had become so strained that when social democrats tried to speak at feminist meetings they were prevented.

Nevertheless, when the feminists decided to call an All-Russian Women's Congress in December 1908, the social democrats were of the opinion that the conference should be used as a platform to propagate the ideas of socialism and explain the fundamental difference between the social democratic and the feminist attitudes to the woman question.

The Central Bureau of trade unions took the initiative in holding elections of delegates among working women. The Petrograd committee of the social democratic party, considering that the preparation for these elections should be used to carry out socialist propaganda, later joined in the work, and delegated Vera Slutskaya (who was killed during the days of the October revolution). From September onwards, meetings were held in union buildings, clubs and in workers' flats. Wherever possible legal meetings were held, but more often than not they had to be illegal, and every possible way of avoiding the ever-present and watchful eye of the police – such as organising a club "name-day party", a "handicrafts class" or an arithmetic lesson – had to be employed. For the writer of these lines the work was made particularly difficult by the fact that at the time of these preparations she became a "wanted person". In spite of all the obstacles and hindrances, meetings to discuss the women's conference took place almost every day. It has been calculated that in St Petersburg alone more than fifty meetings were held in the space of two months, which for that time must be considered a very large number.

The large factories sent their representatives to the conference, as did the St Petersburg Committee of the party and the trade unions. However on 10 December, the day of the trimphant opening of the All-Russian Women's Congress in the hall of the Town Duma, there were in all only forty-five representatives of the organised proletariat, as against seven hundred representatives of bourgeois feminism. But this tiny group of working women was able to show the difference between the ideas of the feminists and the proletarian class objectives.

Immediately the conference opened, the representatives of the workers' organisations, accepting a revolutionary class position, formed themselves into a separate group. On all fundamental issues discussed at the conference (female suffrage, labour protection, cottage industry, the organisation of women into parties or their unification around the bourgeois women's societies), the group brought forward independent resolutions that proclaimed their revolutionary perspectives.

These resolutions were systematically voted out by the majority at the conference. The most heated debate was on the question of the means and methods of struggle to achieve the vote for women. Confirmed feminists such as Mirovich, Kal'manovich and the Cadet, Tyrkova, attacked the working women and sneeringly accused the social democrats of only accepting the equality of women "in theory". The socialists answered by pointing to the hypocrisy of bourgeois feminism, which was apparent in its position over the struggle for women's equality. For

while demanding equality, the feminists were prepared to leave in force the basic elements of the social structure – private property and the capitalist means of production – on which the slavery of women is based.

E.D.Kuskova, with two or three other followers, tried to make peace between the feminists of the Cadet type and the group of working women. However, the wider the debate ranged, the clearer the basic differences between the suffragettes and the supporters of social democracy on the questions of tactics and a political programme became. Since it had been decided to use the conference as a "legal platform", the group of working women made contributions to the discussion on all the basic questions. Comrades Nikolayeva, Volkhova and Burko were among those who spoke, and their speeches, printed in the "Materials of the Women's Congress", give a wealth of statistical information and an accurate picture of the position of women in the factories, the small handicraft industries and the printing works etc.

When the various points on the agenda had been dealt with, the conference went on to the main question of the creation of an "all-women's" organisation which would be supposedly "above class" but essentially bourgeois. The group of working women delivered a statement of their position and left. Their exit emphasised the fact that the participation of the organised working women in a bloc with the bourgeois feminists was considered unacceptable on any terms. Their action displeased not only the feminists but the whole bourgeois press.

For the broad mass of working women the conference and the intervention of the working women's group was of great educational significance, for a sharp and distinct line had been drawn between bourgeois feminism and the proletarian women's movement. Some of the less politically conscious women had up until the conference harboured illusions about the possibility of unifying all women in the name of the fight for women's rights and interests; after the conference debate, which had shown the hostility of the feminists towards revolutionary socialism, these illusions died a natural death. It became clear to every thinking working woman that nothing could be expected from the bourgeois feminists.

The women's conference destroyed any attraction feminism might have had for the broad masses of the working class. After the conference, working women joined the unions in large numbers and grouped themselves round the party. There was steady progress in the class education of the working women. It would have been possible to look to the future with great hopes had not the political atmosphere been so gloomy. Russia was entering a period of dark and terrible reaction.

From

The Social Basis of the Woman Question

Leaving it to the bourgeois scholars to absorb themselves in discussion of the question of the superiority of one sex over the other, or in the weighing of brains and the comparing of the psychological structure of men and women, the followers of historical materialism fully accept the natural specificities of each sex and demand only that each person, whether man or woman, has a real opportunity for the fullest and freest self-determination, and the widest scope for the development and application of all natural inclinations. The followers of historical materialism reject the existence of a special woman question separate from the general social question of our day. Specific economic factors were behind the subordination of women; natural qualities have been a secondary factor in this process. Only the complete disappearance of these factors, only the evolution of those forces which at some point in the past gave rise to the subjection of women, is able in a fundamental way to influence and change their social position. In other words, women can become truly free and equal only in a world organised along new social and productive lines.

This, however, does not mean that the partial improvement of woman's life within the framework of the modern system is impossible. The radical solution of the workers' question is possible only with the complete reconstruction of modern productive relations; but must this prevent us from working for reforms which would serve to satisfy the most urgent interests of the proletariat? On the contrary, each new gain of the working class represents a step leading mankind towards the kingdom of freedom and social equality: each right that woman wins brings her nearer the defined goal of full emancipation. . . .

Social democracy was the first to include in its programme the demand for the equalisation of the rights of women with those of men; in speeches and in print the party demands always and everywhere the withdrawal of limitations affecting women; it is the party's influence alone that has forced other parties and governments to carry out reforms in favour of women. And in Russia this party is not only the defender of women in terms of its theoretical positions but always and every-

where adheres to the principle of women's equality.

What, in this case, hinders our "equal righters" from accepting the support of this strong and experienced party? The fact is that however "radical" the equal righters may be, they are still loyal to their own bourgeois class. Political freedom is at the moment an essential prerequisite for the growth and power of the Russian bourgeoisie; without it, all the economic welfare of the latter will turn out to have been built upon sand. The demand for political equality is for women a necessity that stems from life itself.

The slogan of "access to the professions" has ceased to suffice; only direct participation in the government of the country promises to assist in raising women's economic situation. Hence the passionate desire of women of the middle bourgeoisie to gain the franchise, and hence their hostility to the modern bureaucratic system.

However, in their demands for political equality our feminists are like their foreign sisters; the wide horizons opened by social democratic learning remain alien and incomprehensible to them. The feminists seek equality in the framework of the existing class society; in no way do they attack the basis of this society. They fight for prerogatives for themselves, without challenging the existing prerogatives and privileges. We do not accuse the representatives of the bourgeois women's movement of failure to understand the matter; their view of things flows inevitably from their class position. . . .

The Struggle for Economic Independence

First of all we must ask ourselves whether a single united women's movement is possible in a society based on class contradictions. The fact that the women who take part in the liberation movement do not represent one homogeneous mass is clear to every unbiased observer.

The women's world is divided, just as is the world of men, into two camps; the interests and aspirations of one group of women bring it close to the bourgeois class, while the other group has close connections with the proletariat, and its claims for liberation encompass a full solution to the woman question. Thus although both camps follow the general slogan of the "liberation of women", their aims and interests are different. Each of the groups unconsciously takes its starting point from the interests of its own class, which gives a specific class colouring to the targets and tasks it sets itself. . . .

However apparently radical the demands of the feminists, one must not lose sight of the fact that the feminists cannot, on account of their class position, fight for that fundamental transformation of the

contemporary economic and social structure of society without which the liberation of women cannot be complete.

If in certain circumstances the short-term tasks of women of all classes coincide, the final aims of the two camps, which in the long term determine the direction of the movement and the tactics to be used, differ sharply. While for the feminists the achievement of equal rights with men in the framework of the contemporary capitalist world represents a sufficiently concrete end in itself, equal rights at the present time are, for the proletarian women, only a means of advancing the struggle against the economic slavery of the working class. The feminists see men as the main enemy, for men have unjustly seized all rights and privileges for themselves, leaving women only chains and duties. For them a victory is won when a prerogative previously enjoyed exclusively by the male sex is conceded to the "fair sex". Proletarian women have a different attitude. They do not see men as the enemy and the oppressor; on the contrary, they think of men as their comrades, who share with them the drudgery of the daily round and fight with them for a better future. The woman and her male comrade are enslaved by the same social conditions; the same hated chains of capitalism oppress their will and deprive them of the joys and charms of life. It is true that several specific aspects of the contemporary system lie with double weight upon women, as it is also true that the conditions of hired labour sometimes turn working women into competitors and rivals to men. But in these unfavourable situations, the working class knows who is guilty. . . .

The woman worker, no less than her brother in misfortune, hates that insatiable monster with its gilded maw which, concerned only to drain all the sap from its victims and to grow at the expense of millions of human lives, throws itself with equal greed at man, woman and child. Thousands of threads bring the working man close. The aspirations of the bourgeois woman, on the other hand, seem strange and incomprehensible. They are not warming to the proletarian heart; they do not promise the proletarian woman that bright future towards which the eyes of all exploited humanity are turned. . . .

The proletarian women's final aim does not, of course, prevent them from desiring to improve their status even within the framework of the current bourgeois system, but the realisation of these desires is constantly hindered by obstacles that derive from the very nature of capitalism. A woman can possess equal rights and be truly free only in a world of socialised labour, of harmony and justice. The feminists are unwilling and incapable of understanding this; it seems to them that when equality is formally accepted by the letter of the law they will be

able to win a comfortable place for themselves in the old world of oppression, enslavement and bondage, of tears and hardship. And this is true up to a certain point. For the majority of women of the proletariat, equal rights with men would mean only an equal share in inequality, but for the "chosen few", for the bourgeois women, it would indeed open doors to new and unprecedented rights and privileges that until now have been enjoyed by men of the bourgeois class alone. But each new concession won by the bourgeois woman would give her yet another weapon for the exploitation of her younger sister and would go on increasing the division between the women of the two opposite social camps. Their interests would be more sharply in conflict, their aspirations more obviously in contradiction.

Where, then, is that general "woman question"? Where is that unity of tasks and aspirations about which the feminists have so much to say? A sober glance at reality shows that such unity does not and cannot exist. In vain the feminists try to assure themselves that the "woman question" has nothing to do with that of the political party and that "its solution is possible only with the participation of all parties and all women"; as one of the radical German feminists has said, the logic of facts forces us to reject this comforting delusion of the feminists. . . .

The conditions and forms of production have subjugated women throughout human history, and have gradually relegated them to the position of oppression and dependence in which most of them existed until now.

A colossal upheaval of the entire social and economic structure was required before women could begin to retrieve the significance and independence they had lost. Problems which at one time seemed too difficult for the most talented thinkers have now been solved by the inanimate but all-powerful conditions of production. The same forces which for thousands of years enslaved women now, at a further stage of development, are leading them along the path to freedom and independence. . . .

The woman question assumed importance for woman of the bourgeois classes approximately in the middle of the nineteenth century –

a considerable time after the proletarian women had arrived in the labour arena. Under the impact of the monstrous successes of capitalism, the middle classes of the population were hit by waves of need. The economic changes had rendered the financial situation of the petty and middle bourgeoisie unstable, and the bourgeois women were faced with a dilemma of menacing proportions; either accept poverty, or achieve the right to work. Wives and daughters of these social groups began to knock at the doors of the universities, the art salons, the editorial houses, the offices, flooding to the professions that were open to them. The desire of bourgeois women to gain access to science and the higher benefits of culture was not the result of a sudden, maturing need but stemmed from that same question of "daily bread".

The women of the bourgeoisie met, from the very first, with stiff resistance from men. A stubborn battle was waged between the professional men, attached to their "cosy little jobs", and the women who were novices in the matter of earning their daily bread. This struggle gave rise to "feminism" – the attempt of bourgeois women to stand together and pit their common strength against the enemy, against men. As they entered the labour arena these women proudly referred to themselves as the "vanguard of the women's movement". They forgot that in this matter of winning economic independence they were, as in other fields, travelling in the footsteps of their younger sisters and reaping the fruits of the efforts of their blistered hands.

Is it then really possible to talk of the feminists pioneering the road to women's work, when in every country hundreds of thousands of proletarian women had flooded the factories and workshops, taking over one branch of industry after another, before the bourgeois women's movement was ever born? Only thanks to the fact that the labour of women workers had received recognition on the world market were the bourgeois women able to occupy the independent position in society in which the feminists take so much pride. . . .

We find it difficult to point to even one fact in the history of the struggle of the proletarian women to improve their material conditions to which the general feminist movement has contributed significantly. Whatever the proletarian women have achieved in the sphere of raising their own living standards is the result of the efforts of the working class in general and of themselves in particular. The history of the struggle of the working women for better conditions of labour and for a more decent life is the history of the struggle of the proletariat for its liberation.

What, if not the fear of a dangerous explosion of proletarian dissatisfaction, forces the factory owners to raise the price of labour, reduce hours and introduce better working conditions? What, if not the fear of "labour unrest", persuades the government to establish legislation to limit the exploitation of labour by capital? . . .

There is not one party in the world that has taken up the defence of women as social democracy has done. The working woman is first and foremost a member of the working class, and the more satisfactory the position and the general welfare of each member of the proletarian family, the greater the benefit in the long run to the whole of the working class. . . .

In face of the growing social difficulties, the sincere fighter for the cause must stop in sad bewilderment. She cannot but see how little the general women's movement has done for proletarian women, how incapable it is of improving the working and living conditions of the working class. The future of humanity must seem grey, drab and uncertain to those women who are fighting for equality but who have not adopted the proletarian world outlook or developed a firm faith in the coming of a more perfect social system. While the contemporary capitalist world remains unchanged, liberation must seem to them incomplete and impartial. What despair must grip the more thoughtful and sensitive of these women. Only the working class is capable of maintaining morale in the modern world with its distorted social relations. With firm and measured step it advances steadily towards its aim. It draws the working women to its ranks. The proletarian woman bravely starts out on the thorny path of labour. Her legs sag; her body is torn. There are dangerous precipices along the way, and cruel beasts of prey are close at hand.

But only by taking this path is the woman able to achieve that distant but alluring aim – her true liberation in a new world of labour. During this difficult march to the bright future the proletarian woman, until recently a humiliated, downtrodden slave with no rights, learns to discard the slave mentality that has clung to her; step by step she transforms herself into an independent worker, an independent personality, free in love. It is she, fighting in the ranks of the proletariat, who

wins for women the right to work; it is she, the "younger sister", who prepares the ground for the "free" and "equal" woman of the future.

For what reason, then, should the woman worker seek a union with the bourgeois feminists? Who, in actual fact, would stand to gain in the event of such an alliance? Certainly not the woman worker. She is her own saviour; her future is in her own hands. The working woman guards her class interests and is not deceived by great speeches about the "world all women share". The working woman must not and does not forget that while the aim of bourgeois women is to secure their own welfare in the framework of a society antagonistic to us, our aim is to build, in the place of the old, outdated world, a bright temple of universal labour, comradely solidarity and joyful freedom. . . .

Marriage and the Problem of the Family

Let us turn our attention to another aspect of the woman question, the question of the family. The importance that the solution of this urgent and complex question has for the genuine emancipation of women is well known. The struggle for political rights, for the right to receive doctorates and other academic degrees, and for equal pay for equal work, is not the full sum of the fight for equality. To become really free woman has to throw off the heavy chains of the current forms of the family, which are outmoded and oppressive. For women, the solution of the family question is no less important than the achievement of political equality and economic independence.

In the family of today, the structure of which is confirmed by custom and law, woman is oppressed not only as a person but as a wife and mother. In most of the countries of the civilised world the civil code places women in a greater or lesser dependence on her husband, and awards the husband not only the right to dispose of her property but also the right of moral and physical dominance over her. . . .

Where the official and legal servitude of women ends, the force we call "public opinion" begins. This public opinion is created and supported by the bourgeoisie with the aim of preserving "the sacred institution of property". The hypocrisy of "double morality" is another weapon. Bourgeois society crushes woman with its savage economic vice, paying for her labour at a very low rate. The woman is deprived of the citizen's right to raise her voice in defence of her interests: instead, she is given only the gracious alternative of the bondage of

marriage or the embraces of prostitution – a trade despised and persecuted in public but encouraged and supported in secret. Is it necessary to emphasise the dark sides of contemporary married life and the sufferings women experience in connection with their position in the present family structure? So much has already been written and said on this subject. Literature is full of depressing pictures of the snares of married and family life. How many psychological dramas are enacted! How many lives are crippled! Here, it is only important for us to note that the modern family structure, to a lesser or greater extent, oppresses women of all classes and all layers of the population. Customs and traditions persecute the young mother whatever the stratum of the population to which she belongs; the laws place bourgeois women, proletarian women and peasant women all under the guardianship of their husbands.

Have we not discovered at last that aspect of the woman question over which women of all classes can unite? Can they not struggle jointly against the conditions oppressing them? Is it not possible that the grief and suffering which women share in this instance will soften the claws of class antagonism and provide common aspirations and common action for the women of the different camps? Might it not be that on the basis of common desires and aims, co-operation between the bourgeois women and the proletarian women may become a possibility? The feminists are struggling for freer forms of marriage and for the "right to maternity"; they are raising their voices in defence of the prostitute, the human being persecuted by all. See how rich feminist literature is in the search for new forms of relationships and in enthusiastic demands for the "moral equality" of the sexes. Is it not true that while in the sphere of economic liberation the bourgeois women lag behind the many-million strong army of proletarian women who are pioneering the way for the "new woman", in the fight for the solution of the family question the laurels go to the feminists?

Here in Russia, women of the middle bourgeoisie – that army of independent wage-earners thrown on to the labour market during the 1860s – have long since settled in practice many of the confused aspects of the marriage question. They have courageously replaced the "consolidated" family of the traditional church marriage with more elastic types of relationship that meet the needs of that social layer. But the subjective solution of this question by individual women does not change the situation and does not relieve the overall gloomy picture of family life. If any force is destroying the modern form of the family, it is not the titanic efforts of separate and stronger individuals but the inanimate

and mighty forces of production, which are uncompromisingly building life on new foundations. . . .

The heroic struggle of individual young women of the bourgeois world, who fling down the gauntlet and demand of society the right to "dare to love" without orders and without chains, ought to serve as an example for all women languishing in family chains – this is what is preached by the more emancipated feminists abroad and our progressive equal righters at home. The marriage question, in other words, is solved in their view without reference to the external situation; it is solved independently of changes in the economic structure of society. The isolated, heroic efforts of individuals is enough. Let a woman simply "dare", and the problem of marriage is solved.

But less heroic women shake their heads in distrust. "It is all very well for the heroines of novels blessed by the prudent author with great independence, unselfish friends and extraordinary qualities of charm, to throw down the gauntlet. But what about those who have no capital, insufficient wages, no friends and little charm?" And the question of maternity preys on the mind of the woman who strives for freedom. Is "free love" possible? Can it be realised as a common phenomenon, as the generally accepted norm rather than the individual exception, given the economic structure of our society? Is it possible to ignore the element of private property in contemporary marriage? Is it possible, in an individualistic world, to ignore the formal marriage contract without damaging the interests of women? For the marital contract is the only guarantee that all the difficulties of maternity will not fall on the woman alone. Will not that which once happened to the male worker now happen to the woman? The removal of guild regulations, without the establishment of new rules governing the conduct of the masters, gave capital absolute power over the workers. The tempting slogan "freedom of contract for labour and capital" became a means for the naked exploitation of labour by capital. "Free love", introduced consistently into contemporary class society, instead of freeing woman from the hardships of family life, would surely shoulder her with a new burden – the task of caring, alone and unaided, for her children.

Only a whole number of fundamental reforms in the sphere of social relations – reforms transposing obligations from the family to society and the state – could create a situation where the principle of "free love" might to some extent be fulfilled. But can we seriously

expect the modern class state, however democratic it may be, to take upon itself the duties towards mothers and children which at present are undertaken by that individualistic unit, the modern family? Only the fundamental transformation of all productive relations could create the social prerequisites to protect women from the negative aspects of the "free love" formula. Are we not aware of the depravity and abnormalities that in present conditions are anxious to pass themselves off under this convenient label? Consider all those gentlemen owning and administering industrial enterprises who force women among their workforce and clerical staff to satisfy their sexual whims, using the threat of dismissal to achieve their ends. Are they not, in their own way, practising "free love"? All those "masters of the house" who rape their servants and throw them out pregnant on to the street, are they not adhering to the formula of "free love"?

"But we are not talking of that kind of 'freedom'," object the advocates of free marriage. "On the contrary, we demand the acceptance of a 'single morality' equally binding for both sexes. We oppose the sexual licence that is current, and view as moral only the free union that is based on true love." But, my dear friends, do you not think that your ideal of "free marriage", when practised in the conditions of present society, might produce results that differ little from the distorted practice of sexual freedom? Only when women are relieved of all those material burdens which at the present time create a dual dependence, on capital and on the husband, can the principle of "free love" be implemented without bringing new grief for women in its wake. As women go out to work and achieve economic independence, certain possibilities for "free love" appear, particularly for the better-paid women of the intelligentsia. But the dependence of women on capital remains, and this dependence increases as more and more proletarian women sell their labour power. Is the slogan "free love" capable of improving the sad existence of these women, who earn only just enough to keep themselves alive? And anyway, is not "free love" already practised among the working classes and practised so widely that the bourgeoisie has on more than one occasion raised the alarm and campaigned against the "depravity" and "immorality" of the proletariat? It should be noted that when the feminists enthuse about the new forms of cohabitation outside marriage that should be considered by the emancipated bourgeois woman, they speak of "free love", but when the working class is under discussion these relationships are scornfully referred to as "disorderly sexual intercourse". This sums up their attitude.

But for proletarian women at the present time all relationships,

whether sanctified by the church or not, are equally harsh in their consequences. The crux of the family and marriage problem lies for the proletarian wife and mother not in the question of the sacred or secular external form, but in the attendant social and economic conditions which define the complicated obligations of the working-class woman. Of course it matters to her too whether her husband has the right to dispose of her earnings, whether he has the right by law to force her to live with him when she does not want to, whether the husband can forcibly take her children away etc. However, it is not such paragraphs of the civic code that determine the position of woman in the family, nor is it these paragraphs which make for the confusion and complexity of the family problem. The question of relationships would cease to be such a painful one for the majority of women only if society relieved women of all those petty household cares which are at present unavoidable (given the existence of individual, scattered domestic economies), took over responsibility for the younger generation, protected maternity and gave the mother to the child for at least the first months after birth.

In opposing the legal and sacred church marriage contract, the feminists are fighting a fetish. The proletarian women, on the other hand, are waging war against the factors that are behind the modern form of marriage and family. In striving to change fundamentally the conditions of life, they know that they are also helping to reform relationships between the sexes. Here we have the main difference between the bourgeois and proletarian approach to the difficult problem of the family.

The feminists and the social reformers from the camp of the bourgeoisie, naively believing in the possibility of creating new forms of family and new types of marital relations against the dismal background of the contemporary class society, tie themselves in knots in their search for these new forms. If life itself has not yet produced these forms, it is necessary, they seem to imagine, to think them up whatever the cost. There must, they believe, be modern forms of sexual relationship which are capable of solving the complex family problem under the present social system. And the ideologists of the bourgeois world – the journalists, writers and prominent women fighters for emancipation – one after the other put forward their "family panacea", their new "family formula".

How utopian these marriage formulas sound. How feeble these palliatives, when considered in the light of the gloomy reality of our modern family structure. Before these formulas of "free relationships" and "free love" can become practice, it is above all necessary that a

fundamental reform of all social relationships between people take place; furthermore, the moral and sexual norms and the whole psychology of mankind would have to undergo a thorough evolution. Is the contemporary person psychologically able to cope with "free love"? What about the jealousy that eats into even the best human souls? And that deeply-rooted sense of property that demands the possession not only of the body but also of the soul of another? And the inability to have the proper respect for the individuality of another? The habit of either subordinating oneself to the loved one, or of subordinating the loved one to oneself? And the bitter and desperate feeling of desertion, of limitless loneliness, which is experienced when the loved ceases to love and leaves? Where can the lonely person, who is an individualist to the very core of his being, find solace? The collective, with its joys and disappointments and aspirations, is the best outlet for the emotional and intellectual energies of the individual. But is modern man capable of working with this collective in such a way as to feel the mutually interacting influences? Is the life of the collective really capable, at present, of replacing the individual's petty personal joys? Without the "unique", "one-and-only" twin soul, even the socialist, the collectivist, is quite alone in the present antagonistic world; only in the working class do we catch the pale glimpse of the future, of more harmonious and more social relations between people. The family problem is as complex and many-faceted as life itself. Our social system is incapable of solving it.

Other marriage formulas have been put forward. Several progressive women and social thinkers regard the marriage union only as a method of producing progeny. Marriage in itself, they hold, does not have any special value for woman – motherhood is her purpose, her sacred aim, her task in life. Thanks to such inspired advocates as Ruth Bray and Ellen Key, the bourgeois ideal that recognises woman as a female rather than a person has acquired a special halo of progressiveness. Foreign literature has seized upon the slogan put forward by these "advanced women" with enthusiasm. And even here in Russia, in the period before the political storm [of 1905], before social values came in for revision, the question of maternity had attracted the attention of the daily press. The slogan "the right to maternity" cannot help producing lively response in the broadest circles of the female population. Thus, despite the fact that all the suggestions of the feminists in this connection were of the utopian variety, the problem was too important and topical not to attract women.

The "right to maternity" is the kind of question that touches

not only women from the bourgeois class but also, to an even greater extent, proletarian women as well. The right to be a mother – these are golden words that go straight to "any women's heart" and force that heart to beat faster. The right to feed "one's own" child with one's own milk, and to attend the first signs of its awakening consciousness, the right to care for its tiny body and shield its tender soul from the thorns and sufferings of the first steps in life – what mother would not support these demands?

It would seem that we have again stumbled on an issue that could serve as a moment of unity between women of different social layers; it would seem that we have found, at last, the bridge uniting women of the two hostile worlds. Let us look closer, to discover what the progressive bourgeois women understand by "the right to maternity". Then we can see whether, in fact, proletarian women can agree with the solutions to the problem of maternity envisaged by the bourgeois fighters for equal rights. In the eyes of its eager apologists, maternity possesses an almost sacred quality. Striving to smash the false prejudices that brand a woman for engaging in a natural activity – the bearing of a child – because the activity has not been sanctified by the law, the fighters for the right to maternity have bent the stick in the other direction: for them, maternity has become the aim of a woman's life. . . .

Ellen Key's devotion to the obligations of maternity and the family forces her to give an assurance that the isolated family unit will continue to exist even in a society transformed along socialist lines. The only change, as she sees it, will be that all the attendant elements of convenience or of material gain will be excluded from the marriage union, which will be concluded according to mutual inclinations, without rituals or formalities – love and marriage will be truly synonymous. But the isolated family unit is the result of the modern individualistic world, with its rat-race, its pressures, its loneliness; the family is a product of the monstrous capitalist system. And yet Key hopes to bequeath the family to socialist society! Blood and kinship ties at present often serve, it is true, as the only support in life, as the only refuge in times of hardship and misfortune. But will they be morally or socially necessary in the future? Key does not answer this question. She has too loving a regard for the "ideal family", this egoistic unit of the middle bourgeoisie to which the devotees of the bourgeois structure of society look with such reverence.

But it is not only the talented though erratic Ellen Key who loses her way in the social contradictions. There is probably no other question about which socialists themselves are so little in agreement as the question of marriage and the family. Were we to try and organise a survey among socialists, the results would most probably be very curious. Does the family wither away? Or are there grounds for believing that the family disorders of the present are only a transitory crisis? Will the present form of the family be preserved in the future society, or will it be buried with the modern capitalist system? These are questions which might well receive very different answers. . . .

With the transfer of educative functions from the family to society, the last tie holding together the modern isolated family will be loosened; the process of disintegration will proceed at an even faster pace, and the pale silhouettes of future marital relations will begin to emerge. What can we say about these indistinct silhouettes, hidden as they are by present-day influences?

Does one have to repeat that the present compulsory form of marriage will be replaced by the free union of loving individuals? The ideal of free love drawn by the hungry imagination of women fighting for their emancipation undoubtedly corresponds to some extent to the norm of relationships between the sexes that society will establish. However, the social influences are so complex and their interactions so diverse that it is impossible to foretell what the relationships of the future, when the whole system has fundamentally been changed, will be like. But the slowly maturing evolution of relations between the sexes is clear evidence that ritual marriage and the compulsive isolated family are doomed to disappear.

The Struggle for Political Rights

The feminists answer our criticisms by saying: even if the arguments behind our defence of the political rights of women seem to you mistaken, is the importance of the demand itself, which is equally urgent for feminists and for representatives of the working class, thereby reduced? Cannot the women of the two social camps, for the sake of their common political aspirations, surmount the barriers of class antagonism that divide them? Surely they are capable of waging a common struggle against the hostile forces that surround them? Division between bourgeois and proletarian is inevitable as far as other questions

are concerned, but in the case of this particular question, the feminists imagine, the women of the various social classes have no differences.

Feminists keep returning to these arguments with bitterness and bewilderment, seeing preconceived notions of partisan loyalty in the refusal of representatives of the working class to join forces with them in the struggle for women's political rights. Is this really the case? Is there a complete identity of political aspirations, or does antagonism hinder the creation of an indivisible, above-class army of women in this instance as in all others? We have to answer this question before we can outline the tactics that proletarian women will employ in winning political rights for their sex.

The feminists declare themselves to be on the side of social reform, and some of them even say they are in favour of socialism – in the far distant future, of course – but they are not intending to struggle in the ranks of the working class for the realisation of these aims. The best of them believe, with a naive sincerity, that once the deputies' seats are within their reach they will be able to cure the social sores which have in their view developed because men, with their inherent egoism, have been masters of the situation. However good the intentions of individual groups of feminists towards the proletariat, whenever the question of class struggle has been posed they have left the battlefield in a fright. They find that they do not wish to interfere in alien causes, and prefer to retire to their bourgeois liberalism which is so comfortably familiar.

No, however much the bourgeois feminists try to repress the true aim of their political desires, however much they assure their younger sisters that involvement in political life promises immeasurable benefits for the women of the working class, the bourgeois spirit that pervades the whole feminist movement gives a class colouring even to the demand for equal political rights with men, which would seem to be a general women's demand. Different aims and understandings of how political rights are to be used create an unbridgeable gulf between bourgeois and proletarian women. This does not contradict the fact that the immediate tasks of the two groups of women coincide to a certain degree, for the representatives of all classes which have received access to political power strive above all to achieve a review of the civil code, which in every country, to a greater or lesser extent, discriminates against women. Women press for legal changes that create more favourable conditions of labour for themselves; they stand together against the regulations legalising prostitution etc. However, the coincidence of these immediate tasks is of a purely formal nature. For class interest determines

that the attitude of the two groups to these reforms is sharply contradictory. . . .

Class instinct – whatever the feminists say – always shows itself to be more powerful than the noble enthusiasms of "above-class" politics. So long as the bourgeois women and their "younger sisters" are equal in their inequality, the former can, with complete sincerity, make great efforts to defend the general interests of women. But once the barrier is down and the bourgeois women have received access to political activity, the recent defenders of the "rights of all women" become enthusiastic defenders of the privileges of their class, content to leave the younger sisters with no rights at all. Thus, when the feminists talk to working women about the need for a common struggle to realise some "general women's" principle, women of the working class are naturally distrustful.

2

Exile and War

As the militancy of 1905 receded, the tsarist government felt itself in a position to arrest and imprison working-class leaders and to take back the rights of organisation and activity which workers had exercised during the period of revolution. As the most articulate and energetic organiser of proletarian women Kollontai was an obvious target of the repression, and in December 1908 she left for Western Europe in order to avoid the charges laid against her, which would mean her being sent to Siberia if she remained.

During the eight years of her exile Kollontai travelled widely, but she made Berlin her base and became an active member of the German social democratic party. The 1908 women's congress had brought her into conflict with both Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, and so during this period she did not play an "active role in the work of the Russian centres", turning most of her attention instead to practical work in Western social democracy. Her experience as a rank-and-file agitator in Germany gave her the opportunity to witness the struggle between revisionism and orthodox marxism at grass-roots level. Kollontai was a great keeper of diaries; as she made the rounds of party branches, talking to members and speaking at meetings, she recorded incidents that were to her of interest and significance. She later assembled these in a book, published in St Petersburg in 1912 under the title **Around Workers' Europe** (pp. 88-98). Much of the material in this deals with the position of women in Germany and the approach to women's work of the German social democratic party. She sketches the conditions of women's lives: the long hours, the low pay and the housework. Kollontai does not deny that women are often backward and lack political understanding, but her examples seek to illustrate that this "greyness", as she calls it, is not inherent but the result of woman's social situation. She prefers to stress that, despite the tangible barriers to women's political consciousness, some women do come to recognise the importance of the socialist movement. She gives several portraits of women who had become active members of the party, and gives evidence of the fact that women are not always unreceptive to new ideas.

The parallels between the problems of work among women in Russia and Germany were many; in fact, in every European country the influx of women into production had raised the question of how political parties were to incorporate women into their programmes and organisations. The double battle waged by Kollontai in Russia against both the feminists and the social democrats was being fought everywhere, but with important local variations. In Germany, for example, the influence of the feminists in the working-class milieu was insignificant and the party's main problems were internal, while in England few even of the socialists saw the question of women's equality as a class issue. In 1908 Kollontai visited Britain at the invitation of Dora Montefiore and the Adult Suffrage Society. She spoke at Chandos Hall and Hyde Park Corner, and saw with her own eyes the negligible influence of the orthodox social democrats: when an international women's conference was being held at the Albert Hall, the ILP attempted to run a series of counter-meetings, but while thousands flocked to hear the feminists the socialists could only draw a handful.

The nature of the relationship between women's liberation and social democracy was debated at various congresses of the Second International and more particularly at two socialist women's conferences held in 1907 and 1910, at both of which Kollontai represented Russia. All socialists were, in principle, for women's suffrage, but opinion was sharply divided over the question of when and how it could be achieved. At the conferences the majority of the English women defended their tactics of joining forces with the large and powerful bourgeois feminist groups, even when the latter favoured a limited franchise which would in no way benefit working women. The Austrian delegates and the influential German socialist Lily Braun, on the other hand, were sceptical of any demand for the vote for women, seeing it as a concession to feminism, and proposed that the social democrats should only bring forward the question of female suffrage when this would not harm the "common struggle". Kollontai was naturally in agreement with neither of these views. She aligned herself with the Germans, who argued that the franchise was not an end in itself but an issue around which to organise women and draw them into political life, and that therefore it was both wrong to work with the bourgeois feminists (as in such an alliance the socialists lost their freedom to put over class perspectives) and wrong to sacrifice this demand to an abstract idea of unity which was in practice the unity of men with other men, leav-

ing women still outside politics.

But German social democracy, despite its resolutions, proved incapable of integrating the struggle for the liberation of women into its practice. Kollontai saw this lack of success neither as an isolated aberration nor as inevitable and stemming from the intrinsic nature of social democracy, but as in some way connected with inadequacies of a more general type. A well-informed and astute observer, she reaches beneath the surface and exposes the lack of revolutionary politics and the alarming growth of bureaucratic practices in the everyday life of the German party. The message of **Around Workers' Europe** was not lost on readers; and soon after it was published, an anonymous review appeared in a German newspaper attacking the author for her insulting comments about the party. Kollontai found herself shunned by her former colleagues (with the exception of Karl Liebknecht and Clara Zetkin). Kautsky was furious at this "betrayal" and broke off relations with her, and Scheidemann wanted her expelled from the party; she was not asked to do any more agitational work.

In her article "Why was the German proletariat silent during the July days?" (pp. 99-103), published in September 1915 in the first issue of the Bolshevik journal **Kommunist**, Kollontai sought to show that the passivity of the working class in 1914 was neither evidence of their incapacity to grasp revolutionary ideas, as some would have it, nor proof, as many on the right wing argued, of their excellent understanding that the fight for the fatherland was essential. The explanation for the behaviour of the German proletariat, she said, could be found in the politics of social democracy in the preceding period: while in theory retaining the idea of revolution as the ultimate goal, the leaders had in practice turned their attention entirely to immediate gains, thus shelving all the points in the maximum programme and depriving the working people of revolutionary experience, of any scope for self-activity. Trained to accept that the party leaders knew best, the workers suppressed their own doubts about the need for war and supported the party line.

Internationalism had gone down with a few feeble gestures instead of a fight. Commitment to working-class solidarity could not compete with commitment to the defence of German freedom against

tsarist autocracy. When the Reichstag group met on 3 August 1914 to discuss their position on the question of the war credits, only fourteen delegates were for making a stand. Even the left wing was divided over the issue, men such as Stadthagen and Paul Lensch siding with the majority. Wurm, one of the leading social democratic deputies, was horrified to find Kollontai, an alien, present at the Reichstag debate on war credits, and when Kollontai visited the Women's Bureau, she was given a cold reception and left with the impression that she was no longer a comrade in their eyes but a Russian.

The entries Kollontai made in her diary during 1914 (pp. 81-7) also allow us to trace the development of her position on the war and on the tasks of the left social democrats in the new situation. In her 1926 autobiography she wrote: "To me the war was an abomination, a madness, a crime and from the first moment onwards – more out of impulse than reflection – I inwardly rejected it."[16] Her diary confirms that her first response to the outbreak of the war was of a very emotional kind. That her feelings could be deeply affected and that she took events to heart does not mean to say that her political views were dictated by her emotions, although intellect and emotion were certainly in greater interdependence than in the case of her male contemporaries. Theoretical reflection plays little part in her diary, but her commitment to internationalism and the class struggle is evident throughout; her understanding of the reasons behind the collapse of social democracy assuages the pain and prevents it from becoming despair and disillusionment.

At first Kollontai could not accept Lenin's idea of "transforming the imperialist war into a civil war", preferring the slogan of "war on war" as the one that would unite all who disapproved of the policy of the Second International. But she recognised the necessity of building a new International, and worked to regroup those in the socialist movement who remained true to socialist policies.

This isolated Kollontai on the far left of the German party. She felt she could do little useful work in Berlin, and after a hard struggle with the authorities she succeeded, along with other Russian social democrats, in getting permission to leave. She went to Denmark, moving on to Stockholm when she found that the Danish social democrats shared the German party's attitudes to the war. She was

no luckier in Sweden: this time it was the government who limited her activities, by putting her in prison. Soon after her release she tried Norway; the law did not take exception to her presence, the socialists were receptive to her ideas, and so this time she stayed. Everywhere she went she wrote and spoke against the war. She established links with the left wing of Scandinavian social democracy, seeking to draw them to her position. In January 1915 she participated in a conference of socialists from the neutral countries which met in Copenhagen.

In this way Kollontai was breaking out of her isolation. Towards the end of 1914 she had "learned of the attitude which the leading minds in the Russian party had taken towards the war. When the news finally reached us, by way of Paris and Switzerland, it was for us a day of great joy."[17] New fields now offered themselves for the development of contacts with the international left wing. In January 1915 a group of Russian social democrats in Paris, including Martov and Trotsky, had begun producing a newspaper, **Nashe slovo** ("Our Word"), for which Kollontai wrote several articles on the question of the working women's movement and the war. With Lenin she exchanged a good many letters; she gradually came to agree with his position on the war and to identify herself with the Bolsheviks. Initially Kollontai's view had a strong pacifist tinge: she had seen the struggle against militarism as the primary duty of the socialist movement, and had praised the Scandinavian social democrats for opposing the arming of the proletariat. But eventually she came to appreciate that the outbreak of the war signalled the start of an era of unprecedented opportunity for the working class and that, with revolution on the agenda, the fight against militarism was not enough. Her conversion, though, was slow, and she did not immediately adopt Lenin's solutions as her own; the article which she contributed to the journal **Kommunist** did not set out concrete Bolshevik policies of action, but confined itself to vague calls for methods of work "which revolutionary creativity suggests". From mid-1915, however, she worked hard to further the Bolshevik cause. At Lenin's request she wrote a pamphlet "Who Needs the War?" for distribution among the troops. The pamphlet was issued in large numbers in several different languages and is said to have been very effective as propaganda. On 8 October she arrived in New York and spent the following months travelling round the United States addressing English and German audiences on aspects of European politics, above all on the question of the war. She also worked

within the colony of émigré Russian socialists seeking support for Lenin's platform. The Mensheviks dubbed her a "leninist agent".

The difficulties of organising an underground party, directed from abroad, had produced some divisions within Russian social democracy which were artificial and unnecessary, but these same difficulties had also masked the increasing divergence between the Bolshevik and Menshevik outlooks. The outbreak of the war brought to the fore the question of the nature of the Russian revolution (which had seemed to some not urgent), and buried secondary questions which had previously seemed to some the most important of all. Divisions became clear-cut: in 1915 Kollontai officially joined the Bolshevik party.

From

Excerpts from a Diary

Evening, 30 July:

War is a fact, a reality. I only came to feel this today when I read about the death of the refugees from Belgrade. The sacrifices and the horrors of war. . . . I do not understand anything. Why have the social democratic women not yet issued a single proclamation? Why are we not hearing anything about workers' demonstrations in Germany? In Paris things are on the move, people are struggling against the war. . . .

31 July:

But in Germany everything is quiet. What is the party waiting for? Why are they being so slow? The tone of **Vorwärts** is not at all militant. As if they were still waiting for something. But what on earth for? War, after all, is a fact. On the train I bought a copy of **Vorwärts** at Munich station. Again the incredibly "abstract" tone. On 28 July there was a street demonstration on Unter den Linden. But apparently it was not much of a success. The usual thirty-two *Volksversammlungen* (workers' meetings) in Berlin. More vigorous protests against pork prices than usual. But the party has not put out one appeal, not one call, not one inspired deed which could rouse the workers to take action. When will they begin to act? War is already with us. . . . They should use all those who are being mobilised, they should give the signal for action now, now before the threat has closed in. Delay on the part of the party has no justification. There is no time for discussion, we need action. . . .

Vorwärts notes that "our country" does not want war. What does this word country mean? What has "country" got to do with it? Why not say simply "the workers will not allow war"? The article states that Russia will try to avoid war because she is afraid of the inevitable consequence – revolution. Here, **Vorwärts** warns Germany: let the country remember that war does not mean that tsarism has already been overthrown, let Germany be wary of the danger of "dark" Russia. . . . What is all this supposed to mean? There is a hint of chauvinism in this. . . .

4 August:

Backstage the Reichstag is deserted. I catch sight of Kautsky.

How old and lost he looks. I ask his opinion of events. What does he think will happen next? His answer comes as a total surprise: "At such a time each of us should learn to carry his cross." His "cross"? Has the old man lost his reason?

Göhre comes in and takes a seat. He is full of naive patriotism. I listen and cannot take it in; have they gone mad, or is it I who have lost my balance? The barrier of non-communication grows wider and wider.

"Just think," he says, "who would have believed that there was so much patriotism, so much enthusiasm amongst our social democrats? Many have volunteered for the front. Yes, Germany is dear to us all. We have been invaded and we must stand our ground. We will show them that socialists can die for their country too. . . ."

Stadthagen is in a nervous state. He calls me to one side. He informs me in a confidential tone of the "monstrous, unprecedented disagreements" in the Reichstag group. At the evening session things nearly got out of hand. A minority of fourteen, including Haase and Liebknecht, argued against the decision of the majority to vote for the budget.

What? Vote for the budget? I cannot believe my ears.

"Of course, but that is not the point," he continues. "The difficulty was we could not agree on the wording. The reasoning of the statement explaining our action is quite incorrect and unsuitable."

Stadthagen considers that, given the situation, the position of the minority is simply "childishness" (*Kinderei*). War is a fact. By abstaining from voting the socialists could lost all their popularity in the eyes of the workers. They would be considered enemies of the "fatherland", and this would affect the future of the party. The working masses were in favour of the war. Germany had to defend herself.

"Were robbers to attack my house I would be a fool if, rather than fighting back, I started discussing the need for the humane approach."

"And what about international workers' solidarity?"

"There's nothing we can do. At this moment solidarity can do nothing to avert the war."

I feel indescribably grieved and alienated.

Backstage is still deserted. The usual spectators have been mobilised. Only the old men are left.

Frank, David and Wendel enter. I hear Wendel say: "If the editorial board of Vorwärts have still not understood where our duty lies, they need sending to the lunatic asylum."

This is Wendel, the youngest member of the Reichstag. The talented Wendel has turned patriot.

"I'm off to fight," he says. "The army needs me more than the offices of **Vorwärts.**"

And Frank volunteered for the war. He is surrounded; everyone shakes his hand.

"I am asking to be at the very front. I do not understand how one can sit in safety while comrades are facing the bullets."

But why, oh why allow them to face the bullets?

Now comes the decisive moment. I still cannot believe that they will vote for the credits. It seems to me that they will change minds at the last minute. The second session begins at five o'clock. There is a rush of people to the gallery. But the morning tension has gone. Faces are calm, with expressions that are almost of satisfaction. People are even making jokes. Haase reads the group's declaration:

"For the above-mentioned reasons the social democratic group declares itself in favour of the credits."

Uproar. The Reichstag has never seen anything like it. People leap out of their chairs, shout and wave their arms. . . . I notice that this outburst of patriotism is by no means confined to the benches of the right. . . .

The Reichstag is dissolved. The last glimmer of popular control over the actions of this trigger-happy government has disappeared. Liebknecht and I leave together and take a long walk in the Tiergarten. There are only a few trams and all the buses have been mobilised.

"What will happen to the International? Today we destroyed it," he says. "A new generation is needed before it can be recreated. The working class of the world will never forgive the German social democrats for today's work."

I feel as if I had just attended an execution. A terrible feeling, a chilling sense of one's own impotence. But Liebknecht continues, calling for the need to take heart and take action:

"But we cannot leave things as they are. We must begin to fight back immediately. We have to fight for immediate peace, we have to expose the hypocrisy of the government. We have to tear the mask from their face."

6 August:

The carriages of the suburban railway are packed. There are crowds on the platforms to see off the soldiers leaving for the front. Flowers, kisses, tears. Cries of "vivat". Hands and hats, waving in the air. Posters adorning the sides of the carriages carry the message in bold type: "Catch Russian spies". . . . Chauvinism, like an infection, is

striking down even the strongest. Lensch, who yesterday was for refusing the credits, is already prepared to desert to the side of Wendel and Frank. Haase is manoeuvring. He understands the folly of the chosen tactics, but after he had read out the declaration in the Reichstag his hands were tied. In the ranks of the party complete insanity reigns. Everyone has become a patriot. Everyone is ready to cry "long live the Kaiser". And the masses? What does the proletariat think? What do the people think? They have been waiting all these days for the signal from the party. After the voting of the credits, the atmosphere changed sharply. The tension was broken, but the energy was diverted into wild chauvinism. The party had not been able to open the sluice-gates in time to turn activity into another channel. And now it is already too late.

7 August:

I made a hurried visit this evening to our colony at Hallensee. One and all are in the grip of an incomprehensible chauvinism. Yesterday they worshipped everything German and today they are foaming at the mouth and cursing the Germans. . . . They almost seem to be desiring the victory of the Russian troops. What does this mean? Will the Russian comrades become patriots?

8 August:

I was surprised at the motley crowd: very respectable fathers of families, little boys, ladies in fine summer gowns and hatless working women. But they all shout in the same manner. They surround the telegram boys and cry hurrah and threaten their enemies. Even the socialists say "now Germany is united, no longer are there classes and no longer is there a party." But this is not true. It is absolutely untrue.

Yesterday a friend called to see me. Her husband has gone to the front. She cried bitterly; she does not understand in the least why the war is being fought. Who needs the war? And her husband was not at all keen to go to war. The workers of the Charlottenberg district were waiting for the party to initiate action. They were prepared to come out, they were not in favour of the mobilisation. Many decided not to go to the call-up centre. But they received notices from the regional committees [of the party] urging them to fulfil their duties as citizens. . . .

13 August:

Night: The proletariat does not support the war. I heard at the Liebknechts' how during the first days of the war the workers besieged

the regional committees in expectation of the signal to action. Everyone believed that the party would put up a fight. Now the atmosphere has changed considerably. But even so, if you talk to workers on their own they usually do not approve of the war.

23 August:

During the first days of the war I was oppressed by the awareness that the German party was destroyed, that after such conduct her authority would be shattered. Now I look at the matter differently. It seems to me that maybe things have worked out for the best, historically speaking. Social democracy found itself in a cul-de-sac. Its creativity had dried up. It had become set in its ways. There was no spirit, no enthusiasm. Tradition and routine held sway.

It always surprised me that no new leaders had arisen in the party. This lack is in itself a sign of stagnation. A period of creativity always throws up big personalities. Twenty and thirty years ago, in the period of the formation of German social democratic politics, there were big names. Over recent years there has been no one at all. The creative personality comes forward when there is a field for action, when there is scope for the spirit. But in our bureaucratised environment people even begin to be afraid of new ideas. And the last thing they want to allow is criticism. What the party says goes.

When the war threatened, the masses through lack of practice had lost the ability to think and judge and discuss things, and naturally enough they waited humbly and obediently for the "signal" from above. They besieged the district committees hoping to find out what they were supposed to do. And the regional committees also waited to see what the executive committee would say. The EC lost its nerve. It was not used to the "unexpected".

I remember spending evenings with Heine, Frank and Stampfer in the café they frequented. They were supposed to be men with a great future. But, in actual fact they were colourless toers-of-lines, following the EC on everything. And indeed, without this obedience it was impossible to make a career in the party. Liebknecht, they avoided. And Rosa? Well, the EC is rather afraid of her, but all the same, where possible they have kept her at a distance – while on the other hand these "representatives of the proletariat", these careerists, who have never sacrificed anything for the class, get a pat on the back from the EC. They have been put forward as candidates to the Reichstag, they were elected to congresses. . . .

The Franks and Stampfers, of whom so much was expected,

remind me of the priests at the end of the pagan era. They spend their evenings in their café indulging in malignant gossip. They gossip, tell tales and are full of derision for everything that in public the party holds to be "sacred" and beyond criticism. They scoff at everything – at people, the actions of the EC or the current political line, in a petty, cynical way. Bebel, Adler and Kautsky could not have acted like this. But to these "young and promising" men, the party is only necessary as the springboard to a deputy's seat. The worker's movement is to them "subject to the evolutionary process", and politics is basically nothing more than a game . . . a game for the crowd. We are cleverer and will first and foremost look after our own, personal interests. That, it seems to me, is how these careerists looked at socialism. And their number has grown. It was not the sense of self-sacrifice, not an agonising search for methods of struggle, not an impatient movement forward that ruled in the party, but a bureaucratic machine that preached caution, discipline and routine. How could such a party protest against the war? How could such a party do anything but shirk its duty in the face of the tide of patriotic fervour? The war drove the party into a corner, but even before that the party had been heading this way.

But maybe now party members will begin to review the situation and criticise? And a critical approach is a creative approach. The first days of the war were days of great disappointment. But now I feel that the collapse was inevitable. It was better that way. New beginnings are needed. A reconsideration of values. German social democracy will no longer stifle the international workers' movement with its amazingly heavy bureaucratic apparatus and its suffocating correctness.

24 August:

I talked with some social democratic women about the need for a demonstration of working women. The men have voted; now the mothers must have their say. A demonstration? Now? Against the war? The women look at me with amazement and distrust. It is impossible . . . martial law . . . the masses will not understand. . . .

The knowledge that international workers' solidarity is destroyed weighs upon everyone. What will happen now? I argue that it would be possible to put out at least a manifesto, stating our negative attitude to the war, and to raise the question of solidarity, to protest against the pogroms, the brutality, the violence, the chauvinism. To raise the slogan of peace. They argue that this is not possible. **Die Gleichheit** (the paper Zetkin edited) has been confiscated. No manifestos or appeals will change anything. All that women can do is to help the victims of the

war. Matilda V., who was recently a radical, explains to me all the advantages of work in ladies' committees alongside all kinds of "princesses" and "countesses". The "princesses" learn to "respect" the working women. And the working women learn "self-activity". What could be better than self-activity in these philanthropic organisations? They recognise that the position of the proletariat is growing more precarious with every day. But the urban councils have already outlined a plan of aid. Soldiers' wives will receive larger benefits; soldiers' families will have security of tenure. In a word, Germany at war is creating more or less a socialist heaven. . . .

But the working women are already demanding peace.

Yes, it's true that they do not sympathise with the war, but that is because they do not understand it. . . . We can only struggle for peace when we have rid ourselves of the danger of a Russian invasion. . . . Do not forget that the victory of tsarism means the ruin of social democracy.

3 September:

I keep thinking about the fate of social democracy. The "fall" of the largest workers' party has taken place, and the result is that the party has ceased to play a role in politics. It is no longer listened to. Events pass it by. The EC thought, or at any rate assured us, that by concluding a truce with the monarchist government the party was guaranteeing itself a great influence on the course of events. But they miscalculated.

The phrase "the unity of Germany" is not an empty sound. And social democracy itself is trying harder than anyone else to create the illusion of the complete dissolution of all parties in an ecstasy of chauvinism. At district meetings a few bold individuals are still to be found who will express their rejection of the position adopted by the party, and who will call for class policies. They threaten to settle accounts when the war is over. But in the end they are forced to be silent. It is not the party officials that enforce silence. The workers themselves have been fooled by the skilful game of "unity".

From

Around Workers' Europe

Germany: the scene at a local party meeting

"Most of the women are 'housewives'," the local women's organiser explains. "Some of them work at home for buyers; none of them are factory workers. They don't go to meetings – when would they find the time? What with the housework and the children. . . ." Today their husbands had let them come; "Mr Secretary" had been very insistent that they be present.

"Why don't you organise?" I ask the women, and catch myself listing the "benefits" of organisation just as the speaker had done at the meeting. I mention the fact that **Die Gleichheit**, the women's newspaper, can be received free of charge.

"Reading? When do we get time to read? I've got things at home to be darned that have been waiting over a week; I've had no time to start on the work. So when would I find time for reading?"

"I would like to join the party," admits another woman, "but it would be very difficult to pay the subscriptions. I've got a big family. My husband pays money into three different funds and that means a whole mark every week. How could I afford to take more money from the housekeeping? He brings home ten marks on Saturdays and I have to use all my wits making ends meet."

"Is that really true then, that any woman has the right to join the group?" asks a third.

"Of course."

"Why has my husband never told me? I asked him about it. . . . Friedrich, Friedrich, why have you been hiding it from me that I can become a member of the party?"

Friedrich looks uncomfortable.

"Oh, didn't I tell you?" he mumbles lamely.

One woman with a "pretty face" and a red print skirt stands watching me carefully; she says nothing but she keeps standing there.

I go over the advantages of organisation once more, emphasising that a woman's twenty pfennig monthly subscription would not put too much pressure even on the most modest income. There are many sympathetic sighs, but only two hands reach forward for the leaflets.

"Give me one," the woman in the red skirt says suddenly in a

decisive voice. "Five pfennigs a week isn't that much. He can drink a mug of beer less."

"Well, I might as well put my name down," says an elderly woman. "My five pfennigs might as well be of use to people. And the secretary is a really fine young man; he helped my son when he was in trouble and I know others he's helped. A fine young man. If people like him are in the party that means it must be a worthy cause. Put my name down for me, will you; I'm not very good at writing."

"Let me have a leaflet, please." The example is catching on. A young woman stood before me, blushing. "I don't know yet if I want to join," she said, "but I want to have a look. I'll have to ask my husband about it."

"Is your husband a worker?"

"Yes, in an iron-rolling factory."

"Is he a member?"

"Oh, yes, he's the treasurer of the group."

"But then how come you're not in the party?"

"Oh, you see," she looks embarrassed, "my husband didn't want. . . . We've got a family, and then there's the house to look after. He doesn't like it if I go out."

"Wait a moment, I'll have a word with him. Is he here?"

"Oh, no, no. There's no need to talk to him," she said in a worried tone. "I will later, myself. Otherwise he'll get angry. I can sign up later on. I'll contact the secretary. The secretary persuaded my husband to let me come to the meeting today. He said it would put the branch to shame if I didn't come. A bad example to the others. That's why I came."

A party worker from the town of Meissen, near Leipzig, talks to Kollontai

"I like to work with women – after all, I've been through all the same hardships; I speak the same language as they do. We understand each other. They would never listen to a man in the same way. That's why I have been fighting the other comrades and insisting on the idea of introducing women's discussion evenings. Generally speaking we have done very little in this sphere up to now. There are times when I think of how women have to live and I want to give up. When you consider that the majority of those women you saw are married and almost all have jobs. And here we are demanding that after being away from home for ten hours they should, at our bidding, leave their homes untidy, their children untended, their crockery unwashed and rush off to a meeting.

Today is 'subscription day', tomorrow a discussion evening, the day after tomorrow an important political meeting. I'd like to see what would happen to a woman and her family if she decided to really conscientiously fulfil her duties as a party member. Obviously her husband would begin to howl. And what would happen to the children? You see what a conflict there is? It's by no means an easy problem; a hard nut to crack. At times one doesn't know oneself how to advise people, the situation being what it is: should we get women along to all our meetings and reproach them when they spend all their time on home, husband and housework, coming in from the factory and rushing round till midnight, should we rejoice when the children are unwashed, hungry and allowed to roam the streets while their mother is snoozing at a party meeting? Men are lucky: for them this problem doesn't exist. I begin to get very pessimistic when I try to sort these questions out. Of course, in the future things will be different, everything will change, evolution will be completed, but what about now? After all we are dealing with people, and each person only lives once. It's a difficult age we live in, especially for us women. . . ."

**The men of social democracy:
a party member from Landau justifies his refusal
to allow his daughter to attend a political meeting**

"Oh, come on, why on earth should she go to a meeting? She doesn't have to go to a meeting to find herself a husband. Meetings, that's nothing to do with women. A woman must know her place. The struggle – that's for men. If she had the makings of a political agitator and could earn money like you –" he nods in my direction – "I'd drag her along to meetings. But as it is, I have myself to pay for, so how can I be expected to pay for her as well? Forty pfennigs a month: that's money, and money's not to be had just for the asking. . . ."

**On a visit to Grossenhain, a small village near Leipzig,
Kollontai comments on the small number of women
at meetings**

"And why does such a thing worry you?" asked the chairman. His eyes gleamed and his smile was ironical. "Surely you're not one of those campaigners for equal rights?"

"My political activity, I should have thought, must have made that obvious."

"The fact that you are an agitator? That doesn't prove anything. Exceptions are always possible. But for the masses, for the majority

of women, equality is harmful and impermissible. It is a reckless idea. Naive utopianism and foolishness and nothing more."

"How can you say such things when you know very well that in the textile industry where you work female labour plays such a big role?" I countered.

"What's that got to do with it?" was his reply. "What's so good about female labour, I ask you? The household goes to ruin, the home becomes a pigsty, the children die and those that live grow up to be thieves, drunkards and good-for-nothings. And what does a woman who has worked at a factory *look like*? You can see for yourself what a beautiful sight she is. You think that we husbands find this pleasant? You think that love can survive when your wife, even though she's only approaching thirty, looks like a witch?" The old man's eyes blazed, obviously this was a sore point. "I did not allow any of my daughters to descend to such depths. We went hungry, but my wife and I did not give in."

"But you know yourself that there are times, and unfortunately it happens only too often, when there is no other alternative but to send wife and daughters to the factory."

"That's not true. That's a lie," he said, bringing his fist down hard on the table. "If it weren't for women our wages would never have fallen so low. Men would have been able to stand up for themselves; but these females, these hussies are ready to abandon their home and family and to sell themselves to the capitalist, to the devil or anybody you like for some extra bit of frippery. The cause of the class suffers. You think I don't work for the ten-hour day for women? You bet I do. Let the law put them in their place. At our factory we have an eleven-hour day. Do you want us to do ten hours, just for the sake of the women? Do you think the bosses have brought in a ten-hour day? No, they've just started sacking the women. And that's marvellous. Without them the men will be better able to defend themselves. . . . But we'd better go and get on with the meeting."

While staying in a town in the Pfalz region
Kollontai is visited by a woman party member

In front of me stood a small frail woman in a dark scarf. Her face was not beautiful, but it was very alive. "I've come to see you about something very urgent," she said. She told me the story I had heard before about the strike. The situation was critical. The strike was in its fifth day; there were no financial resources. The factory workers were still not unionised; only a dozen or so women were members. The

strikers had turned to the party for help; the party had sent them to the metal union; the metal union refused, saying they should have joined earlier.

But the workers on strike are firm; they're ready for sacrifices. The party ought to make the most of this opportunity, to call some meetings, especially women's meetings; the workers would keep their spirits up and the party would benefit. If morale were boosted and good leadership given, success would be assured and two or three dozen women would join the movement. She asks for my help; the party committee doesn't listen to her, and the woman's *Vertrauensmann* [trade union representative] presents the whole picture in a distorted way.

"And it is at such a moment in particular, with the elections on the horizon, that the party should take advantage of militancy. They can't push us aside just because we're ignorant and don't know much about politics," says the little woman, arguing with an imaginary opponent. "Please don't refuse my request. Come with me to the party office; there's a meeting in progress, so we'll find them there. Go over all the points I've mentioned and suggest that special meetings for women should be organised. It would be good if you offered to conduct them. A new face always draws people."

I realised that my interference was hardly "tactful", but the little woman was insistent and I could not really refuse.

"I've worked at that wretched factory for twenty-two years," she went on. "All my life has disappeared there. I've seen nothing else. I have no family, no friends. There was never any time to think about myself. The boss will tell you how hard I worked and how much I was worth to them. And now they want to throw me out on the street. That shows what cursed bloodsuckers they are. Drain us, suck our blood and then it's out under the hedge to die."

An extraordinary meeting of the committee was in progress; members of the local branches were sitting at a long table. We were met with glances of amazement; they were not pleased to see us.

"Wait in the next room; when we have finished discussing this question we will call you."

We sat down in the next room. We could hear them talking about the coming elections.

"You noticed that they weren't overjoyed at our arrival?" the little woman laughed. "They understood right away why I had brought you along. If only we could win over this. It's a good thing our *Vertrauensmann* isn't here – that would have spoiled everything." The little

woman was whispering now; her face betrayed her anxiety and excitement.

The voices in the next room died down. The chairman himself came in to see us. His tone was unfriendly and official. He listened carefully and asked some questions, coldly catching her out when she contradicted herself. She became agitated and raised her voice.

"Calm down, comrade, calm down; we will look into your suggestion immediately and decide the matter naturally in the interests of the proletariat. We don't need teaching, you know," he finished, in a didactic tone. He returned to the other room. We could hear the measured tones of the chairman, someone's objections. The door opened. We were called in.

"If the situation is such as has been explained to us and a series of women's meetings for the strikers would be useful, the committee gives its agreement. At the same time it continues to insist that the strikers make direct contact with the union."

"Oh, Lord, we've already tried them, and they say. . . ."

The chairman gestured her to stop.

"You haven't been asked to say anything," he said, before continuing. "So, we are suggesting that the delegates come to see us and that together with the women's *Vertrauensmann* we can discuss the further steps. . . ."

"We want the visiting speaker to talk at the meetings," the little woman put in, her energy not deserting her.

"We have not yet looked into the matter of who will conduct the meetings," the chairman responded dryly.

There was nothing more to be said. There were nods of farewell and we left.

My companion did not look very satisfied. She shook her head.

"They'll go off now to discuss the matter. And then they'll have to discuss it a second time . . . and the workers will lose patience. Why can't they understand that we need the meetings now to keep morale up? If only one could just go to the women and say: tomorrow we are having a meeting and the visiting agitator will be speaking to us, especially about us. That would be more like it. Everyone would feel encouraged. 'They think about us. That means they will help us.' That's how they would see it. As it is, they start all this bureaucratic business . . . and now they're going to call in the *Vertrauensmann*, whom no one trusts."

"You know what," I said, "tell the workers to come to my talk today. Your people can speak their mind. . . ."

"That's a good idea. Of course we'll come. We can't be listening to things about Russia when we've got these awkward problems on our mind."

We parted.

I never discovered if they held any meetings for the women on strike. The little woman never came to me again, and although I asked, nobody seemed to know. When I was in another town I learned that the strike had been lost and that many women had lost their jobs. Probably the little woman was among them.

An official working in a rural area near Dresden confides in Kollontai

"I am from Leipzig. I was sent here to build up the group. You need people with sense and intelligence, you know. This is a backwater here. The people are very uneducated. Very dull people. It's unbearable living here for anyone used to cultured society, to social intercourse with people of one's own level, you understand. My wife and I won't be here long. I've already started getting a transfer to Zwickau; after all it's a town, you know, theatres. . . ."

The women liked my story about a friend of mine, a Russian weaver from the Gukov factory who organised a rota system with her husband to deal with the housework.

"That's a good idea," says one woman to her husband, "I'll try a rota."

The husbands smile condescendingly, but they look a bit afraid that suddenly their wives really might try to follow the imprudent advice of the "Russian" agitator. . . .

At the end of my talk, a pale-faced youth came up to me, hobbling on crutches, extended a thin, flat hand, and began to speak apologetically.

"Although I'm very young – I'm not yet twenty-one years old – I hope that all the same you will agree to come and hold a meeting at our tobacco factory. What you said today is very relevant to us. There are six hundred workers and the majority are women. . . ."

"If I have enough time, I'll certainly come," I replied.

"Any time suits us. We could even manage tomorrow. Whenever

is convenient for you. We'll have everything ready. I know of course that I'm still young, but I'm sure you'll be satisfied with the arrangements."

What a strange young man, I thought. What's age got to do with it? I went over to the chairman's table where the local committee was in session. I informed them of the young man's suggestion and expressed my readiness to stay on in the town. "Who invited you? Oh, that little boy who's still under twenty-one and was let into the organisation after the new law? That young puppy was it?"

And the honourable old men swooped down on the poor boy. He looked upset but defended himself in a staunch and determined manner. The "elders" were full of indignation and gave him a good talking to, but they appeared to give in. I was mystified. What "offence" had the young man committed? Why this wrath?

A couple of days later the brave young tobacco worker who was "still-under-twenty-one" explained the riddle. It turned out that it was a combination of a number of crimes that had so incensed the committee. In the first place, as an unofficial and in no way authorised person he had no right to invite me to speak. Having conceived of such an idea, he should have put the suggestion to the local sub-group for discussion, the sub-group's decision should have then been passed on to the group's committee, and only after their approval had been given might I have been approached. His youth only added to the gravity of his crime.

Until the act of 1908 those under twenty-one were not eligible to join the party, and the "raw youths" who became members once the law was changed were treated with caution and distrust. They were children who had been allowed to sit at the grown-ups' table but had to be told repeatedly to "keep their hands under the table" and to "be quiet when the grown-ups are talking".

Kollontai discusses the economic crisis in Russia with a leading member of the party in Offenbach

"It's very sad," he said, "for us and for you, that the crisis is continuing. Your Russians have inundated the town. They behave themselves in an inadmissible fashion. Such lumpen, excuse the expression. Such primitive creatures; shameless wage-squeezers. We have had to take serious measures to deal with them. We may not like doing it, but we have had no alternative."

"A dishonest people, entirely lacking the proletarian instinct," another broke in, and they continued, each interrupting the other to "honour" my fellow countrymen.

"What crimes have the Russians committed? What are they

guilty of? Give me the facts? Are there really so many of them in Offenbach?"

"So many? There are thousands. And still more arriving. We have been working over a period of many years to build our organisation and can say with pride that we've achieved a great deal. I am a member of the union committee and I can speak with authority about the situation of our union before the Russian invasion. The pay is better here than in other places in Germany and we work less hours. The employers take notice of us; and then your Russians arrive on the scene, and what do you think happens? We, the experienced workers, get thrown out in favour of these ignorant, slovenly, clamorous Russians. They descend on the town like locusts; they besiege the union demanding help; they sit on the staircase in the trade-union house with their children and bags and bundles. And then it all begins. The employers start firing our workers and taking the Russians on. Just take a look and admire their handiwork; the old organised workers shuffle round without work and these unworthy people, these filthy competitors fill the workplace. Now, what do you say to that?

"And they've filched so much money. Not just from the union funds; they've borrowed money from individual persons and not paid it back. There have been even worse incidents . . . cases of theft. . . ."

Kollontai applies to the editor for an explanation

"They've already had time to complain, have they? It's an unpleasant story. It's partly because of this that we have got you to come and speak. Well, not 'we' exactly; it was I who insisted and I didn't get my way without a battle. Your talk will serve to clear up the question and that is why I stood firm."

At last I begin to get to the root of the matter.

The famous lock-out of the leather workers in Vilnius in 1907 threw a large number of Russian workers, mainly Jews, on to the foreign market. Some of them came to Offenbach. They were hungry, unorganised, and downtrodden; they were as defenceless as children. They were faced with the problems of new customs and a new language. They were treated as evil competitors. Naively trusting, they knocked on the doors of the unions, pestered the party committee and generally made a nuisance of themselves. They demanded help and support, but it was not forthcoming. What alternative was left open to them? They went alone to the factory offices prepared to accept whatever conditions were laid down. And really, can one blame these poor and hungry individuals? But the consequences of their action were unfortunate. The employers

were overjoyed at the idea of such cheap labour and began to sack their old workers. The trade unionists and party members came off worst. A tricky situation, one has to admit.

"Naturally feelings ran high, especially since your Russians did not observe the traditions which the Germans hold sacred and were disorderly and undisciplined. Things reached a point where at one meeting of the leather-workers' trade union the question was seriously discussed of approaching the local government, on which we have a majority at the moment, and demanding in the name of the union that the Russians be expelled from the town. I had to argue hard to get the idea dropped. And don't get the idea that it was only the 'opportunists', the practical men, the leaders of the trade-union movement who were behind this decision; some party members on the left were also in favour of emergency measures. Now passions have died down somewhat and people have understood what path socialists ought to follow. We have begun to conduct agitation among the Russians and are trying to draw them into the unions. We're issuing leaflets in their lingo. Of course, it's all very difficult, even just finding people to speak at meetings who know their language."

He asks me to dwell, in my talk, on the position of Jews in Russia and to explain the circumstances forcing Jewish workers to seek their fortunes abroad.

"If you can paint a vivid picture of their plight, our members will be ashamed of their chauvinism and will understand their mistake. Don't be afraid to use harsh words. We have to jolt their socialist conscience. Practically the entire editorial board is secretly embittered against your Russians. You will see for yourself this evening, when the question of your meeting is discussed. I am afraid that several people might try and put a spoke in the wheel. They are not very keen for you to speak."

Kollontai had arrived in the town
too late to give her talk as scheduled,
and the committee meets to discuss new dates

One by one the members of the local committee take the floor. "This is not an opportune time for such a talk. . . . Moving the date will kill any chance of success. It is not therefore sensible to saddle the funds with these expenses. . . . Five days is not enough to advertise the meeting, it doesn't give time to get a meeting together. There is no point in diverting forces from immediate and necessary work." They calculate finances, touch on the unsuitability of the chosen topic, its poor agita-

tional value. They are clearly in favour of cancelling the meeting. I look at the editor for support. He casts friendly and reassuring glances in my direction but keeps silent.

"Comrade K. will, I think, have nothing against the cancellation of her talk and will agree to go straight to G. and W. to conduct a number of women's meetings," concludes the chairman.

I prepare to make some objections but the editor gets in first. He begins calmly, almost with indifference, as if he did not really want to speak at all, pointing out that the cancellation of the meeting will mean greater losses for the fund than moving the meeting to another day. At public meetings the collection usually covers expenses. Now, if the meeting is cancelled the money will have to be taken from the funds. The speaker has already arrived and so travel expenses will have to be paid out. Does the committee, in view of this, find the decision to cancel the meeting sufficiently grounded?

Not one word about the "ideological" significance of the meetings; I am extremely annoyed and disappointed. But the expressions on the faces of those present show that the editor's words have had their effect. Both sides quote a few more figures and then, by an overwhelming majority, the meeting is fixed for the next Saturday.

Why was the German Proletariat Silent during the July Days?

For many people it is still difficult to understand how the German proletariat was able to change so suddenly from an army of class fighters into an obedient and melancholy herd advancing to a certain death. Why, when war broke out over Europe, did the masses – we are talking here of the masses and not of the leaders – make no attempt to defend the positions they had held previously? Why did they give up their strongholds and fortresses to their class enemies without a fight? Even if it were true that protest and resistance would have been immediately smothered, how did it come about that there were no expressions of indignation among the rank and file, or that dissatisfaction did not lead to any spontaneous unrest or mass action of any kind? For is it not true that the political party responsible for the education of the workers in Germany has a level of theoretical training which is an example for the proletariat of the whole world? Does this then mean that socialist education does not bear the fruits we had the right to expect?

This is how the sceptics talk. There are others, including certain Russian social-chauvinists and Germanophiles, who see even here a proof of the "political consciousness" of the German workers: the masses, they say, understood in time that it was the future unhindered development of the country, with which the successes of the workers' movement are closely linked, that was at stake; in the "national interest" the people decided not to obstruct the worthy work of German arms.

However, both those who are painfully perplexed at the course of events and criticise the German workers and those who hasten to justify their behaviour, are, in fact, slandering the masses. For both evaluations are based on a consideration of the visible results only, and lose from view the fundamental internal reason for the silence and inactivity of the masses in the historic days of July and August. The passivity of the proletariat at this critical moment can surprise only those who know the German workers' movement from the imposing figures of its annual reports, its "workers' palaces" and its growing number of representatives in local government and in parliament. For those who were familiar with the everyday life of the German movement

the silence and passivity of the broad masses does not come as a surprise. However, it is not the masses who are to be blamed for their failure to respond to events; the reasons for this silence and passivity must be sought at a deeper level, in the character and temperament of the German workers' movement of recent years.

If the working masses are to be capable not only of grasping the significance of current political events but also of responding actively to them without having to wait for the word from above, it is necessary to cultivate a tradition of open activity, to foster faith in one's own strength and to allow for what we can call "revolutionary experience". It was this experience that was avoided in Germany. The party leaders grew to resemble old-fashioned pedagogues: on the one hand they developed class thinking, but on the other, they held back and impeded manifestations of revolutionary will or mass action in every way. The workers were taught "in theory" to recognise and understand the usefulness and the meaning of revolutionary struggle, and their heads were crammed with historical examples and facts. But the workers were not given the opportunity to try their strength against their class enemies, to improve morale and steel their will through the difficulties and sacrifices of mass action and revolutionary struggles – the "wise" leader-guardians did not wish to allow such things to happen.

Take, for example, the sphere of trade-union struggle. The amazing successes of German industry over the past twelve years have created a situation which favours the increasingly frequent application of compromise tactics. The employers, in order to avoid open struggle, which was often to their disadvantage and was always fraught with consequences, were willing to offer the workers certain minimal handouts; the union centres would rush to accept and arrange a "peaceful compromise". Is it not significant that at a time when the total number of industrial conflicts was rising the number ending in strike action was decreasing relatively? Many see this as a demonstration of a growth in the strength and the role of the trade-union organisations. The masses, according to this logic, can afford to be inactive, and confidently entrust the defence of their interests to their centres, which are able to find a way out of any conflict and know how to influence the employer!

But when one takes into consideration the fact that most confrontations ending without a strike and without the participation of the workers are settled by compromises, and by compromises which are more often to the advantage of capital than to labour, one is forced to look a little differently at the situation. There have been so many clashes on this account between the workers and their leaders. One only

has to remember the strike of the Hamburg metal-workers, which was wrecked by the union centres. Remembering similar occurrences in the practice of the English trade unionists (particularly up until the period of the mass strikes of 1911-1912), revolutionary marxists have always pointed out the dangers of such opportunist tactics for the revolutionary workers' movement. But only a few onlookers realised that the German trade unions, with their methods of "peacefully" resolving conflict, had outdone even their English mentors.

However, it was not the unions alone who "sinned", in the sense of lowering the level of mass activity. The political party followed the same road. It would seem that a party building its tactics on the principle of the revolutionary seizure of political power must try to utilise all its opportunities for political struggle in order to develop and strengthen the revolutionary energy of the masses and to educate them in large-scale action. In practice, though, especially over recent years, the party centres have taken care to do the opposite. The left opposition elements in the party have pointed out these facts explicitly enough, but their voices have been smothered by the accepted authorities representing the leaders. Whether it was a question of fighting high prices or of winning rights for the workers in the Prussian Landtag, the party searched for the most "legal" and uncontroversial methods of struggle. If anyone suggested that the struggle be extended beyond the bounds of closed meetings and assume a more vigorous and revolutionary character, the centres would raise their hands in horror. "Experiment? God forbid. We are not yet strong enough. We have, as yet, insufficient cadres. A defeat would damage our chances in the next election." *Nur immer langsam voran!* The militancy and revolutionary will of the masses were broken, and they failed to develop initiative or the ability to respond to events without orders from above.

The inadequacy of these policies was revealed in July 1914: at a moment when history demanded an uncompromising attitude and revolutionary activity, the German proletariat, schooled in the "uncontroversial" methods of struggle, was unable to act in an independent and energetic fashion. The masses waited expectantly for the word "from above" while the leadership, pointing to the inactivity below, shook their heads and came to the hasty conclusion that the masses were obviously in favour of the war. There was no attempt to check these conclusions by referendum (a measure not impossible to carry out, given the much-vaunted organisation of the party), or by calling for decisive revolutionary resistance to the aspirations of the class in power. The leadership did not appeal for activity from the masses, did not seek to determine

through party democracy the tactics that should be developed, although the question involved the life and death of hundreds and thousands, nay, millions of their comrades, and was a question of life-and-death importance for the whole of the workers' International.

The leadership left the masses to their own fate. Without resistance or struggle they surrendered the revolutionary banner. This behaviour on the part of the leadership confused many of the class-conscious workers, but they were used to offering no criticism and to following their centres without question, and so they pushed aside and ignored the doubts that troubled them. "Our representatives are voting for the war; **Vorwärts** is advising us not to give way to emotions or take rash and foolhardy steps that would give an excuse for excesses. Our elected leaders obviously see and know things that are beyond our comprehension." And so the workers and the masses went to their certain deaths, convinced that the party centres knew what their lives were being sacrificed for.

Would such an abnormal and dangerous situation have been possible had the masses been taught to respond independently and energetically to events, and had the party not carefully stifled every spontaneous protest, every manifestation of reluctance to compromise? The guilt for the silence of the masses at a time of historic importance lies completely with those who, by their worship of peaceful, legal and uncontroversial methods of struggle, and with their hatred of everything that is revolutionary and principled, have educated the workers over the years in a spirit of "peaceful convergence" and muzzled their vitality, creativity and class obstinacy. The workers were no longer capable of issuing illegal proclamations and manifestos, of holding secret meetings in the workshops and in the streets and squares, or of raising the slogan: war on war. The reason they were unable to implement such methods of self-defence, which are born in the midst of struggle and in bursts of revolutionary inspiration, was that in the period before the July days they had been educated within the bounds of strict legality and in boundless submission to their leadership. Traditional demonstrations with their police protection, and theoretical discussions about the reasons for and significance of the war, could not avert the approaching danger of world war. The god of war would only have retreated in the face of angry resistance from the "red spectre".

The tradition of employing only legal, "recognised" and peaceful methods of self-defence tied the German proletariat hand and foot and condemned them to be thrown under the chariot of the god of war. This lesson will be needed by the proletariat of the whole world. This

bloodstained epoch is exposing all the hidden ulcers of the individual national socialist parties and revealing with absolute clarity that the theory of the "adaptation" of the workers' movement to the capitalist system and the theory of "peaceful struggle" for class rule are the greatest dangers confronting the international and revolutionary liberation movement.

Those who criticise the German workers for their low level of activity, as well as those who see this as proof of "political maturity", should remember that the masses will renounce inactivity only at the necessary historic moment, when the proletarian vanguard – the socialist parties of all countries – throw off their paralysing social-reformism and boldly advocate all forms and all methods of struggle which revolutionary creativity suggests.

3

The Revolution

Kollontai was to remember 1917, the year of the Russian revolution, as the highest point in her life. This was the period when she was at the very centre of activity: finding her idea of revolutionary goals and tactics entirely in line with those of Bolshevism, she was able to enter wholeheartedly and enthusiastically into the activity and organisation of that party and as one of the group contributed fruitfully to the realisation of a new social order.

News of the tsar's abdication reached Kollontai in the Norwegian guest-house where she was living, and almost immediately she set about preparations for her return, arriving in Petrograd on 18 March. Her writing on the war and her work for the Zimmerwald left* had not only brought her into the Bolshevik party but had given her standing both in the international movement and in Russian social democracy. Accordingly, the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies despatched a carriage to collect her from the station. The standing she had won was high but, as she soon found, not high enough for her to intervene authoritatively on questions of fundamental party policy. This she was to discover very quickly, for she found herself in total disagreement with Bolshevik tactics at first. The carriage, it transpired, was illustrative of more than Kollontai's importance as a figure of the revolutionary movement; it was a symbol of the truce between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. The Bolsheviks were in a minority in the Soviet, and the few leading party members who by this point had made their way back to the capital from their places of exile – most prominently Stalin and Kamenev – had decided that support for the provisional government and co-operation with the Mensheviks were, in the situation, the best tactics. This suited Chkheidze, the Menshevik chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, very well, and it explains why he had arranged a welcoming party for Kollontai, the Bolshevik. Kollontai was not impressed. Back in 1915

* The minority of former members of the Second International who were against the war first met at Zimmerwald, Switzerland, in 1915; the name of the location became that of the socialist anti-war movement.

she had written in her diary: "If there is not a revolution in Russia now, at this present time, I do not know when there will be." And a few days later she added: "We are at a turning-point in history. We are living through an epoch like the period of transition from the medieval feudal state with its knights and castles. We are at the transition to socialism!" She had come to recognise the probable imminence of social upheavals, and her speeches and articles during the war years had emphasised the need for the independent activity of the revolutionary vanguard and the working class in such a period of revolutionary potential. Before returning to Petrograd she had written to Lenin for general advice, and had received a reply warning against any involvement with social patriotism; without sufficient information, he wrote, it was not possible to suggest detailed policies, but the representatives on the spot would no doubt have worked things out. By the end of the month Lenin had seen some copies of **Pravda** and had had the opportunity to take stock of the kind of policies adopted by the representatives on the spot; he sent an urgent telegram to a number of his followers, Kollontai among them, insisting that there be "no support for the new government" and "no rapprochement with other parties". These were the lines along which Kollontai, Shlyapnikov and Molotov had been arguing, but though these oppositionists had been allowed to state their views at internal party meetings, the majority made sure that there was no broad and open discussion of tactical alternatives within the party in general, and no discussion whatsoever in the press. Consequently, although she was elected to the Petrograd Soviet and almost immediately to its Executive Committee, she does not appear to have used this position to fight for a reversal of party policy. The most she found possible was to work actively in the military section of the party committee, in order to ensure that the party at least developed a certain combativity and preparedness.

In the first few weeks after her return, Kollontai therefore found herself in her usual role of opposition; but whereas before she had taken a rather detached view of party politics, forming her own opinions but not defending them in public debate, her silence in this case was imposed by the circumstances, and as soon as Lenin arrived and circumstances changed she defended her ideas with passion. On 4 April a meeting of Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and independents was held in the Tauride palace. Lenin spoke, expounding his April Theses and calling for a Soviet republic, the nationalisation of the banks and the land, and workers' control over production; the leading Bolshe-

viks dismissed these ideas, arguing that their leader was out of touch with the situation in the country, and a few days later **Pravda** declared Lenin's analysis to be "inacceptable in that it starts from the assumption that the bourgeois-democratic revolution is ended."[18]

In fact Kollontai had been the only person at this meeting to speak in support of Lenin: "Her support," Sukhanov wrote, "called forth nothing but mockery, laughter and hubbub."[19] Unfortunately the speeches made on that occasion were not recorded, but on the following day an article written by Kollontai, "Where Does 'Revolutionary Defencism' Lead?" (pp. 110-12), appeared on the front page of **Pravda**. Although her support for revolutionary perspectives provoked the wrath of the bourgeois press, once the party came to accept these perspectives, her position within the party was much strengthened. In the early years of the century Lenin had been anxious to draw Kollontai to the Bolsheviks because of the "supreme necessity" of articles on the Finnish question, and now she became the party's chief spokesperson on this issue. In mid-June she represented the Bolsheviks at the Ninth Congress of the Finnish Social Democrats, urging them to adopt a revolutionary programme and to break with the Second International. Three days later she spoke at the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets on the Finnish and national questions.

At the end of June she again left Petrograd as a party representative, this time to attend the conference of the Zimmerwald movement scheduled to take place in Stockholm. Few delegates assembled, however, and after informal discussions the "conference" disbanded. As she crossed the frontier into Russia, Kollontai was arrested. Her activities had provoked the anger not only of the bourgeois press but also of the provisional government and so, along with Trotsky and Lunacharsky, she found herself in prison. The government had hoped to rid itself of the Bolshevik opposition to its policies by these means, but discovered that the pressure from the masses for the release of the prisoners was too great. On 21 August Kollontai was freed, and was soon able to begin her work in the Bolshevik central committee, to which she had been elected during her enforced absence. She was present at the CC's extraordinary session on 10 October that voted for the armed uprising, and spent the night and morning of 24 and 25 October at the Smolny

Institute, the Bolshevik headquarters and the centre from which the revolution was organised.

Apart from the important support she had given Lenin over the April Theses Kollontai did not play any great role in the discussion and formulation of general Bolshevik policy. She limited herself to explaining events and policies in a manner understandable to the man and woman in the street; she was considered a popular pamphleteer of considerable force. Fresh editions of previously published pamphlets – "Who Needs the War" and "Working Woman and Mother" – were brought out, and she wrote two new pamphlets – "Who Needs the Tsar; Can we get along without Him?" and "Working Women and the Constituent Assembly". The number of copies circulated was very large even for those times, and the simple yet precise and powerful language in which the pamphlets were written ensured them a grateful reception. Letters were received from party organisations and regiments in various parts of the country asking for "literature, especially the leaflets of Lenin and Kollontai". Lenin complained that she did not write enough. "When do I get the time to write," she defended herself, "when in the space of a single day I have four or five meetings in the barracks, the factories and the fleet?" Lenin argued that articles could reach a wider audience than speeches, "but on the next day," Kollontai notes, "he sent me to the fleet near Helsinki."[20] The spoken word, however, was also an extremely important weapon in 1917, since the men and women of Petrograd were in the main barely literate; at a time of heightened social activity the verbal communication of the streets and markets and of meetings and conferences provided the main stimulus to action. In the international movement Kollontai had earned the name of "Jaurès in skirts"; in Russia it was generally held that Lunacharsky, Trotsky and Kollontai were the most popular and dynamic speakers of the revolution. Her speeches were not recorded, but the press of the time and memoirs written in later years pay tribute to the effect her words produced; as a propagandist and agitator, Kollontai became one of the more important Bolshevik leaders. Her enthusiastic promotion of Bolshevik policies did not last very long, however. In March 1918 the arrest and imprisonment for the alleged incompetence of her husband Dybenko in his new post as Commissar of Military and Naval Affairs moved

Kollontai to make strong criticisms of the government; she saw this episode not in personal terms but as a manifestation of the malfunctioning of the party organisation.

More fundamental was her disagreement with the signing of the Brest-Litovsk treaty. The Bolsheviks had imagined that the breaking of the imperialist chain at the weakest link would be followed by revolutions in other West European countries, but in the absence of an immediate extension of workers' power and until such time as the victorious proletariat of the advanced industrial nations could come to the help of Soviet Russia, the new government had to cope with the war bequeathed to them by tsarism and by the provisional government. Kollontai supported the protagonists of revolutionary war, and spoke at the Seventh Party Congress against the signing of the Brest-Litovsk treaty. Unlike the majority of the "left communists", however, she based herself less on the prospect of extensive and successful revolutionary war than on a refusal to betray Finland: the signing of the peace would, Kollontai insisted, mean leaving the Finnish working-class movement to the mercies of that country's reactionary forces. So when the Fourth Congress of Soviets confirmed the treaty a week after the party congress Kollontai, considering disagreement over such an important aspect of policy to be incompatible with high party office, resigned from the post she held as Commissar of Social Welfare and left the capital for agitational work in the provinces. The high time was over.

Where does "Revolutionary Defencism" lead?

History has placed a responsible and honourable task upon the shoulders of the working class of Russia; as it realises in practice the rights it has fought for and won by revolutionary means, and as it traces the line of its future politics, the working class of Russia is not only strengthening the new Russia but at the same time by its every action, with each political step, it is also defining the character of the new, Third International.

At the present moment Russian social democracy is being closely scrutinised by the proletariat of the whole world. Workers everywhere want to know what the social democrats will say and what position the organised proletariat will take with regard to the war – that old question that has divided the international movement into two hostile camps. During the first months of the war, when there was general muddle and confusion and when so many leaders of the working class sold themselves to the enemy and gave themselves into the hands of the capitalists and the class government of their respective countries, thus betraying international solidarity, the highest ideal of the workers' movement, the lone voices of Liebknecht, Mehring, Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg were joined by the clear and firm voice of the Russian social democratic internationalists.

It was through the efforts of the Russian internationalist comrades that the first Zimmerwald conference was called, and that the ties between the socialists of different countries who criticised all manifestations of any shade of "defencism" were strengthened. The Russian internationalists met the call of the Russian defencists to support the war (which at that time was still being waged for the glory of the "tsar-father") with references to the international resolutions of Stuttgart and Basle, and countered the "civil peace" that Plekhanov and Potresov were advocating with the slogan of civil war.

The victory of the Russian people in the revolution was only made possible by the fact that throughout the war the internationalists had sown in the minds and hearts of the working men and women the beginnings of dissatisfaction with and protest against the existing system, and against the imperialist war and all the consequences of that war. One would have thought that this experience would have acted as clear

proof of the failure of defencist tactics, and would have signalled the triumph of the Russian internationalists. One would have thought that at this present period of victory, defencism would be condemned and utterly rejected by class-conscious, socialist workers.

"Defencism", or as it is now called, "the revolutionary defence of freedom in the face of the attack from the external enemy" (as if the reason for the war were not colonies, trade agreements and the struggle between English and German capitalists for domination of the world market, nor the policy of Russia in the East and the dreams of Constantinople harboured by the Guchkovs and the Milyukovs, but were the secret intentions of the central powers to destroy Russia's "political freedom"!), is not only a betrayal of international solidarity but is also a betrayal of the interests of the Russian proletariat.

First and foremost, defencism demands, in the name of the war, *class peace and unity* with the capitalists. What is involved in this desertion of slogans which before the revolution were defended by the internationalists? It involves not only acceptance of the need to supply the front with all its necessities and participation in the war effort in the rear, and not only concern about the production of shells to help those in command break through Wilhelm's ranks, but also the indefinite shelving of any struggle for economic demands, and – more important still – the renunciation of *independent class politics.*

As soon as we accept the idea of defencism, revolutionary or otherwise, we logically slide down the slippery slope to acceptance of the necessity, in the name of defending "Russian freedom" from Wilhelm's bayonets (arguments borrowed from the French socialists Gide, Sembat and Thomas, from the Belgian minister Vandervelde and the English worker-minister Henderson), of *voting for the budget* and accepting ministerial portfolios. Some of our comrades have been led astray by the skilful agitation of the Russian imperialists, which is designed to deceive the Russian workers with its false slogans of a "war for freedom" – but is that really the path they would have us take? The Russian people have waged a heroic struggle, ridding themselves of the tsar and his servants and winning *political freedom,* but this has not changed the nature of the war. Economic power is still in the hands of the landowner-capitalists and the factory-owners. And the war is being waged not for the freedom of Russia but in the interests of the internal enemies of the workers' and peasants' democracy – the capitalists and property-owners.

Thus the tasks of the internationalist workers have not been altered by the internal changes which have taken place in Russia; it is

still necessary to expose and explain to Russian democracy the true character and aims of the war, to tear the mask from the government of Guchkov and company, and to demand that it not only withdraw Russia from the warfare but that it put pressure on the allies to declare the real aims of the war openly.

The mass of working people not fully versed in politics are "carried away" on this wave of defencism. Our socialist duty demands, nevertheless, that in the name of the preservation and consolidation of those freedoms gained by the revolution, we stay at our posts and pursue a clear policy of revolutionary internationalism, refusing to support a war whose imperialist character is defined by the close alliance between "free democratic Russia", predatory Great Britain and imperialist France.

As long as this "alliance", born of the war, continues, and as long as the secret treaties between Russia, England and France remain in force, "revolutionary defencism" is only a high-sounding phrase covering up the betrayal of international working-class solidarity.

4

Women and the Revolution

In the long years of emigration Kollontai had never given up her activity in the cause of women's emancipation and, as far as she was able, had kept abreast of events taking place within Russia. On her arrival in Petrograd in 1917 she had immediately begun to raise the question of the organisation of women.

Opportunities for work among women were much greater than in 1908 when Kollontai had left for Western Europe, for in the intervening years (and particularly during the world war) the position of women in Russian society had been changing rapidly. Everywhere the number of women working outside the home was increasing: in Petrograd between 1914 and 1917, the number of women workers doubled to reach a third of the workforce. As the men were called to the front, many women became their family's only breadwinner and had to assume many of the responsibilities usually shouldered by their husbands, fathers and brothers. And amidst the dislocation and chaos of the war these responsibilities were particularly onerous. Sorokin, thinking to belittle the revolution, wrote: "If future historians look for the group that began the Russian revolution, let them not create any involved theory. The Russian revolution was begun by hungry women and children demanding bread and herrings."[21] However, it was significant that the day the women chose to demonstrate in force for "bread and herrings" was International Women's Day for the world socialist movement; equally significant was the high level of co-operation between the housewives and male and female workers, and the speed with which the demonstration developed into a general strike and forced the collapse of the monarchy.

Pravda was fulsome in its praise of the revolutionary heroism of the women during the period of the February revolution, and the Bolshevik leadership realised the need for theoretical and organisational directives on work among women. On 10 March the Petrograd committee had delegated Vera Slutskaya to draw up a plan for the party. Three days later her report was delivered to the committee and her suggestions – that a bureau to co-ordinate agitational work among women be established and the newspaper **Rabotnitsa** ("Working

Woman") be restarted – were discussed and approved.

The controversy over the necessity or otherwise of separate organisation of women was by no means over. Slutskaya, in her report, had emphasised that the bureau would conduct agitation but would in no way indulge in "organisation", implying this to be a feminist deviation, and even the modest aims set before the bureau do not seem to have been realised, for although **Pravda** mentioned several branches of the bureau as having been created, none of them functioned except on paper. On her return from abroad, Kollontai was fighting more or less single-handed for the acceptance of her ideas; she battled to bring the first workers' state to an understanding of the theoretical and practical aspects of women's liberation, and without her insistence on the priority of emancipation it is doubtful whether Soviet Russia would have been able in its early years to attack the foundations of patriarchal society so vigorously.

Immediately after her return to Petrograd in 1917 Kollontai wrote an article on "Working women and the Constituent Assembly", which was published in **Pravda** on 21 March. She emphasised that for women the main task was to realise equality in practice and to ensure that the new freedoms granted by the Soviets did not pass them by. Women, she warned, must not expect to be handed equality on a plate; they must be prepared to fight for their interests.

At the seventh party conference, held at the end of April, a special commission considered her suggestion for a separate women's organisation, but once again official approval was withheld. The minutes record the manner in which the discussion of the question at the main session was conducted:

> "The chairman suggests that the question be withdrawn, since none of the women attending have voting rights.
> Sergei suggests that it is necessary to create a technical organ for the direction of agitation among women.
> The chairman suggests the question be withdrawn.
> The question is withdrawn."[22]

The women in the party considered that the reconstituted editorial board of **Rabotnitsa** would supply the organisational centre from which women's work could be directed, and in the absence of other opportunities Kollontai did her best to see that the newspaper was used as effectively as possible.

Even without any formal organisational structure behind her, she did much to organise women and raise their demands. Particularly important was her attempt to direct attention to women who were

as yet outside social production and to draw these women into the sphere of effective social struggle. In April 1917 she spoke to a demonstration of soldiers' wives who had marched to the Tauride palace (the seat of the provisional government) to demand larger benefits, and it was at her suggestion that these women held meetings in their local areas and began to send their delegates to the local Soviets.

On 8 May Kollontai reported to the "Executive Committee of Social Revolutionaries and Social Democrats" on the terrible conditions in which the city's eight thousand laundresses worked, persuading them to grant the striking women credit of up to five thousand rubles; on 7 May the report appeared in **Pravda** in the form of an article entitled "In the Front Line of Fire" (pp. 123-4). A second article under this same heading, printed two days later, took up some of the political questions involved, stressing the importance of this struggle for the working class as a whole, the need for organisation on the part of the women and for solidarity on the part of the other workers. The response to her initiative was encouraging: not only was wide coverage given to the strike in the left-wing press but the appeal for financial as well as moral support was very successful. Kollontai was aware, however, that although her enthusiasm and influence might achieve much, it was essential that the organisations of the working class themselves should learn to see the defence of women's interests as an integral part of their activity. The fact that the Soviets and the unions had to be prodded into solidarity with the laundresses and had not come to their aid automatically showed that responsibilities had not been fully grasped. At the All-Russian Conference of Factory Committees, held between 17 and 22 October, Kollontai reproached the assembled delegates: "It seems to me that in the provinces you are doing nothing, or at least not enough, to raise the class consciousness of the working women, their organisation and preparations for the elections to the Constituent Assembly. I think that you will find information about our work useful."[23]
Earlier that year, in May, she had taken the unions to task for their failure to devote sufficient attention to women's issues. In an article entitled "A Serious Gap" (pp. 125-6) which had appeared in **Pravda** (5 May 1917), she criticised the agenda of the coming trade union conference for not including any discussion of equal pay. The

question of wages was not the only one she took up with the unions. She also made a point of attending the First All-Russian Trade Union conference, where she brought to the notice of the delegates the issues of maternity protection and the participation of women in the trade-union movement.

In September the idea of bringing back the woman's bureau and making it an efficient body received party approval. The bureau was still, officially, simply "for agitation among working women and soldiers' wives", but its first action was to arrange a Petrograd working women's conference to discuss the actual question of organisation. The delegates assembled late in October. The October revolution interrupted their sessions, but they reconvened in mid-November and confirmed the need for a serious approach to women's work. Kollontai's battle was far from won, but in the year of the revolution her belief in the importance of the organisation of women for the politics of social change was gaining wider acceptance.

In recognition of her contribution to the revolution, on 30 October 1917 she was appointed a member of the new government – Commissar of Social Welfare. In the chaotic conditions of the time, political power in Petrograd gave the Bolsheviks very little real grip on the country, but it did give them the authority to promulgate laws: from her position in the Commissariat, Kollontai was therefore able to participate in drafting new legal norms (such as the document which appears here on p. 140) that defined woman not as the slave of man but as an equal citizen of the worker's state. Civil marriage was introduced, divorce made easy and the rights of legitimate and illegitimate children equalised before the law; women were granted full civil rights, their labour in production was protected in various ways and the principle of equal pay for equal work established.

But opportunities for practical action hardly existed; one of the few possibilities open to Kollontai was the reorganisation of her Commissariat. Given the enormity of the social problems engulfing the Russian people, such limitations were frustrating to say the least. Administrative changes were nevertheless seen as important. The Bolsheviks had endorsed the slogan "All Power to the Soviets", and Lenin had written of every cook participating in government. In her

Commissariat Kollontai abolished the old hierarchy; a council of members elected from among the junior officials had assisted her in her initial battle to occupy the ministry building and secure the funds. (When she had gone to install herself in the buildings used by the provisional government's ministry, the doorman refused to let her in, and when she finally got inside, she found the safe was locked.) Organisational issues were discussed by meetings of the entire staff, errand-boys and caretakers included.

"This absurd Madame Kollontay," complained the Countess Panina, who had held office under Kerensky, "invites the servants to come and sit in armchairs at her meetings. Such things cannot be! What can they know of social reforms or of technical training? This is just putting the feet at the top and the head at the bottom, quite mechanically."[24]

Some of the first laws prepared by the Commissariat related to the protection of maternity: women were given a legal equality that took their reproductive function into consideration. Women were not to be employed in various jobs harmful to their health, they were not to work long hours or night-shifts, they were to have paid leave at childbirth. And it was on this question of maternity that Kollontai was able to achieve some practical successes. reorganising the few philanthropic institutions inherited from the old régime and establishing model "Palaces for the Protection of Maternity and Childhood".

Kollontai had prepared a paper on maternity for the 1917 Petrograd working women's conference, and it was typical of her style of work that the decrees subsequently passed by the government were based largely on the conference discussion: her ideas on the subject had been expressed in a book **Obshchestvo i materinstvo** ("Society and Maternity"), published in 1916, and in a short pamphlet, "Working Woman and Mother" (pp. 127-39), written in 1914, in which she discusses in a popular way the difficulties motherhood poses for the proletarian woman, linking the need for measures to ease woman's burden with the need for a socialist society. She was to return to these problems in one of the lectures she gave at Sverdlov University in 1921, which appeared in print two years later in **The Labour of Women in the Evolution of the Economy** (pp. 142-9).

Kollontai followed marxist tradition in believing that participation in social production was essential, because it gave the individual a

position from which to fight for the rights of the class, and because it was "in the interests of the working class not to isolate the mother and the young child from society."[25] Social democracy, she insisted, should fight for a situation where the woman, "without giving up her active role in the struggle for the ideals of her class, can fulfil her biological function."[26] This was what the Bolsheviks strove to achieve through their legislation in the post-October period.

The Bolsheviks, however, passed one law that had not been a social democratic demand in the pre-revolutionary period: in 1920 abortion was legalised. The act legalising state abortion – it was still a criminal offence to perform an abortion privately – argued not in terms of a woman's right to choose (it had been too risky an operation to be thought of as a "right"), but in terms of the ability of the society to provide for all children: while the country was so poor women were to be offered the opportunity of abortion, but in the future, or so the law seemed to imply, the opportunity could be withdrawn:

> "The Workers' and Peasants' Government is conscious of the serious evil of abortion to the community. It combats this evil by propaganda against abortion among working women. By working for socialism and by introducing the protection of maternity and infancy on an extensive scale, it feels sure of achieving its gradual disappearance."[27]

Since the law makes no mention of contraception it leaves the impression that continual pregnancy for women is compatible with their freedom and equality under socialism. Kollontai gave the same impression in her 1921 lectures when she wrote that the need for abortion would disappear when the country's economic problems were solved and when women understood that childbirth was a social obligation. She likewise failed to mention the question of birth control. Knowing as we do that in 1936 abortion was to be made illegal and that for a whole era the mother-heroine was to be held up as a model for women to follow, it must seem that Kollontai's approach to the problem was inadequate and perhaps that these inadequacies were to have a direct connection with the regressions of stalinism.

Many of her formulations jar on the modern ear. She appears at some point to accept explicitly the existence of the "maternal instinct", and she is excessively lyrical in her praises of the relationship between mother and child. Kollontai did not always make it clear in her writing whether she saw certain attributes of the female

character as natural or as socially conditioned; this ambiguity in her writing was particularly pronounced in her discussion of maternity. And her tendency to sentimentalise led her to forfeit accuracy for the sake of effect. When she wrote, for example, that childbirth was the most important moment in a woman's life, she clearly did not mean to be taken literally. In other words, it is necessary to look behind the fine phrases to determine the significance she gave to maternity.

Kollontai felt that in a rationally organised society childbearing would not be associated with the time-consuming and energy-draining tasks of child-care and would be accepted by women as part of their life-experience. Breast-feeding was necessary to ensure the health of the child; therefore it would be a woman's duty to be available to her child in those first months, "but no longer". Subsequent contact with one's own children or with the children of others would be a matter of choice, and would be at the level of purely personal, truly human relations. Society would assume the burdens of their upbringing.

In the early years of the Soviet period, the civil war and the famine reduced the population alarmingly, and this urgent need for labour resources – without workers and peasants there was, after all, no possibility of building a new society – altered Kollontai's emphasis. She spoke less of the liberating potential of birth control and more of woman's duty to have children. But despite this shift in her argument, its premises remained unchanged. Kollontai saw childbearing as a social and not a private matter. Under capitalism the child had been born into the family unit and the burdens of maternity were shouldered by the woman individually, within this unit. In the new society children were to be born to society; children were to belong to the community. Kollontai's remark that a woman "no longer belongs to herself during pregnancy" should be understood in this sense. Similarly, when she writes that maternity is a "social-state concern" she was not advocating manipulative, authoritarian control or "dismissing the rights of children" as has been suggested. (She uses the term "state" loosely to mean collective or community.)

She is discussing, it should be remembered, the rights and obligations of the transitional period and not those circumstances that will obtain in a society where socialism has been realised. She applies the concepts of the militarisation of labour to the sphere of reproduction. The analogy is not explicitly made, but Kollontai implies

that just as it was held that citizens were obliged to work in order to produce the wealth necessary for socialist construction, women had to reproduce the workforce that would work to produce the wealth. In other words, she did not see a woman's right to control her reproductive functions as an abstract right. It was a right that had to be exercised with the needs of society in view.

The problem was that in the conditions of Soviet poverty the collective was unable to do its duty towards women. In any period of transition the interests of women (in their liberation) and the interests of the collective (in an increased birth-rate or rapid economic advance) are inevitably in conflict, and the question arises: is the woman to make short-term sacrifices so that the collective can place more investment in industry, or is the collective to make the initial sacrifices in order that creches and other facilities can be provided without delay? Though from her writings it is clear that the Soviet government was faced with this dilemma, neither the members of the government nor Kollontai were ever fully aware of their problem.

Since the tragic death of Inessa Armand from cholera in the summer of 1920 Kollontai had officially headed the organised women's movement, and she may have felt that this position made it possible for her to guarantee the defence of women's interests. After all, it was the women's department that had pressurised the government into legalising abortion. But she was aware that while the decrees of the government and the initiative of the ministries could achieve considerable improvements in women's position, the most important factor must be the conscious activity of the working women themselves.

It was important to continue the battle for the organisation of women. In the early autumn of 1918 Kollontai toured the textile region east of Moscow, speaking to the women workers; it was there, in the small town of Kineshme, that the idea of holding an All-Russian women's conference was suggested to her. The conference opened on 16 November; over a thousand delegates attended instead of the expected three hundred, and the assembled women voted enthusiastically for a resolution calling on the party to "organise a special commission for propaganda and agitation among women". There was still a cautious attitude, however, towards the

scope that the women's movement should be given, for the resolution added that this commission should be "a technical apparatus for carrying out the . . . decrees of the central committee".

This reluctance to recognise the commissions as having anything more than a propaganda and agitational role revealed itself again at the eighth party congress, which was held in March 1919. The question of women's work had been squeezed in alongside the question of youth work, at the bottom of the agenda for the second session of the organisational section. It was suggested from the floor that since there were no disagreements or objections on the resolution dealing with women, the theses should go forward to the commission without discussion. Kollontai immediately rose to argue against this "extremely rash step", but although she was applauded, the chairman ruled that it was late and the session must end. Kollontai spoke a second time, protesting in the name of the Central Commission of working women and suggesting that the question be discussed at the plenary meeting. The agenda for this meeting, Sosnovskii replied, had already been decided upon. It was therefore agreed that another organisational session would have to be called. For reasons not disclosed in the congress records, this session never met.

The next step was taken outside the party congress. In September 1919 the central committee ratified a decision to replace the women's commissions by women's departments with a definite place in the party structure, more influence on general party politics and more freedom to initiate activity. The organisational principles that Kollontai had first suggested in 1906 were finally adopted.

The women's departments proved a success. They continued to carry out the propaganda and agitational functions of the old commissions, issuing pamphlets and other literature and supervising the women's pages that appeared in the national and local press; but their new status enabled them to increase the scale of these activities. They were also able to extend their organisational work, holding all kinds of meetings and conferences for non-party women. The most important of these was the delegates' meeting: working and peasant women and housewives elected their representatives, who for a period of several months met to discuss local problems, attended political lectures and (if they were unable to read and write) literacy classes, and were attached to sections of the Soviets, participating in its administrative and control work. Since the delegate's office was a rotating one, this form of organisation enabled

the departments to attract a large number of women to political activity – by 1921 there were six thousand delegates representing three million women. The effectiveness of this form of work was reflected in the increasing number of women who became members of the party and delegates to the Soviets.

The promotion from commission to department also gave the women's movement the power to organise its own "action weeks" and initiate its own campaigns. In some areas, workshops were set up to help women achieve economic independence, and there were many reports of women's departments opening creches and canteens.

Kollontai was aware of the organisational inadequacies, particularly in the countryside, and of the difficulties faced when women were still largely illiterate and unqualified, burdened with housework and with unskilled and low-paid work. But she viewed the successes achieved in the first few years with satisfaction, and was optimistic that the October revolution had laid a firm foundation for the all-round liberation of women.

In the Front Line of Fire

"If we close down, you'll suffer – you'll be walking the streets without work." That's how the owners of the laundries try to frighten their women workers. This is the usual method used by the employers to scare their hired slaves. But the laundresses have no need to fear such threats. Just because the owners shut down, seeking more profitable investment for their capital, this does not mean that the demand for laundries disappears. Laundry workers are still needed and that means there is a way out of the situation, particularly now that the "New Russia" is being built.

The town itself must shoulder the responsibility of organising municipal laundries in all areas, and of organising them in such a way that the work is made easier by machines and technology, the working day does not exceed eight hours, wages are established by agreement between the municipality and the laundresses' union, a special cloakroom is provided where the working women can change into dry clothes after work, and much else besides is done to lighten the hard labour of the laundry workers.

During the elections to the regional and central town dumas the laundresses and all class-conscious, organised workers must express their support for these demands. This would be a clear and practical reply to the threat of redundancy and unemployment with which the employers attempt to intimidate the women on strike. It would then be the employers and the laundresses who would be forced to swallow their pride and make concessions.

At the present moment the strike continues, but the employers are using all means at their disposal to break the firm stand of the three thousand women workers organised in the union. The employers are acting in the most outrageous and insolent manner. They are trying to set up their own employers' union of strike-breakers, and when the organised women come to call out these women, who through their lack of understanding of their class interests are jeopardising the common cause, they are not only met with threats and foul language; there was one instance where a woman agitator had boiling water thrown at her, and in one enterprise the proprietress tried to use a revolver.

The employers do not let slip any opportunity to use violence and slander. The working women have only one method of self-defence –

organisation and unity. By fighting for better working conditions in the laundries, for an eight-hour day and for a minimum wage of four rubles a day, the women are fighting not only for themselves but for all working people. The men and women working in other sections of the economy must understand this. The victory of the laundresses will be a fresh victory for the whole proletariat. But in order to guarantee victory a flow of aid is necessary; money is needed. We cannot, we must not deny our material and moral support to those who are fighting for the workers' cause and are bearing the hardships of strike-action.

Every gathering or meeting of working men and women should express its solidarity with the firm struggle waged by the laundry women and should make a collection for these women strikers. The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies should declare their solidarity with the working women, for the women are fighting to force the employers to accede to demands passed by the Soviet. The refusal of the employers to fulfil these demands is thus a *direct challenge to the Soviet.* Comrades, let us hasten to the aid of those who now stand in the trenches, defending the workers' cause; let us support those who are now in the "line of fire", facing the attacks of the capitalist employers.

A Serious Gap

The trade union is calling an all-Russian conference; the organised proletariat, both men and women, must begin now to prepare for this important event. For increasingly the workers' movement is developing not just a fight for certain political objectives but a direct and fierce revolutionary struggle against the organised capitalists *for full economic power*. The trade unions are confronted with new, grandiose and responsible tasks; the former type of union movement, which concentrated mainly on the improvement of the economic position of the workers and on mutual aid, no longer answers the needs of the current higher stage of capitalist development. Now that new forms of social relations are maturing and the glow of the approaching social revolution, under the impact of the war, colours the whole world in unprecedented tones and shades, the trade unions must be prepared not to make compromise deals with capital but, at the moment of collapse of the old world, to become organs capable of entirely taking over the management of industry and the organisation of production.

The new tasks demand not only that the trade-union movement be built along different lines (the most important changes include the elimination of the shop divisions, the transition to organisation at enterprise-level and the merging of the unions and the political organisations) but also make necessary a review of tactics. The narrow opportunist unionism that had flourished in England and has over the last fifteen years become firmly established in Germany must now, in the present conditions, give way to a clearer class tactic which is closely connected with *the mass activity* of the organised proletariat, in defence of its political and economic demands.

Despite its importance the agenda of the conference makes no mention of the tactics to be employed in the current struggle of the organised proletariat against the growing organisation of capital. There is another serious gap in the agenda of the conference. The question of equal pay for equal work, which is one of the most burning questions for the working class as a whole and for working women in particular, is not down for discussion. The low pay women receive is now even more impermissible since the war has thrown a large number of women on the labour market who are their family's sole "breadwinners". The women often have not only their children to support but their husbands, who

have returned from the fighting as invalids and are unable to work. The class-conscious worker must understand that the value of male labour is dependent on the value of female labour, and that by threatening to replace male workers with cheaper female labour the capitalists can put pressure on men's wages, lowering them to the level of women's wages. Therefore only a lack of understanding could lead one to see the question of equal pay for equal work as a purely "women's issue" or to accuse those who bring forward this demand of "feminism".

It is essential that the conference fill this gap and include the question of equal pay for equal work on its agenda. The organised working women must, for their part, begin to collect material showing the difficult economic position of women workers and the differences between the pay of men and women; and they must prepare a paper for the conference on this question, which is of importance for the whole working class. It is time that working women began to exhibit self-activity; it is time they began to take a real part in trade-union affairs. The question of equal pay for equal work is near and dear to the working woman, and if this issue is taken up it should prove possible to show that the patience and passivity of centuries is being overcome by the new woman who is coming into being within the working class – the woman-comrade who is a fighter for the general workers' cause and for the idea of the bright future.

Working Woman and Mother

Mashenka the factory director's wife

Mashenka is the factory director's wife. Mashenka is expecting a baby. Although everyone in the factory director's house is a little bit anxious, there is a festive atmosphere. This is not surprising, for Mashenka is going to present her husband with an heir. There will be someone to whom he can leave all his wealth – the wealth created by the hands of working men and women. The doctor has ordered them to look after Mashenka very carefully. Don't let her get tired, don't let her lift anything heavy. Let her eat just what she fancies. Fruit? Give her some fruit. Caviare? Give her caviare.

The important thing is that Mashenka should not feel worried or distressed in any way. Then the baby will be born strong and healthy; the birth will be easy and Mashenka will keep her bloom. That is how they talk in the factory director's family. That is the accepted way of handling an expectant mother, in families where the purses are stuffed with gold and credit notes. They take good care of Mashenka the lady.

Do not tire yourself, Mashenka, do not try and move the arm-chair. That is what they say to Mashenka the lady.

The humbugs and hypocrites of the bourgeoisie maintain that the expectant mother is sacred to them. But is that really in fact the case?

Mashenka the laundress

In the same house as the factory director's wife, but in the back part in a corner behind a printed calico curtain, huddles another Mashenka. She does the laundry and the housework. Mashenka is eight months pregnant. But she would open her eyes wide in surprise if they said to her, "Mashenka, you must not carry heavy things, you must look after yourself, for your own sake, for the child's sake and for the sake of humanity. You are expecting a baby and that means your condition is, in the eyes of society 'sacred'." Masha would take this either as uncalled-for interference or as a cruel joke. Where have you seen a woman of the working class given special treatment because she is pregnant? Masha and the hundreds of thousands of other women of the propertyless classes who are forced to sell their working hands know that the owners have no mercy when they see women in need; and they

have no other alternative, however exhausted they may be, but to go out to work.

"An expectant mother must have, above all, undisturbed sleep, good food, fresh air and not too much physical strain." That is what the doctor says. Masha the laundress and the hundreds and thousands of women workers, the slaves of capital, would laugh in his face. A minimum of physical strain? Fresh air? Wholesome food and enough of it? Undisturbed sleep? What working woman knows these blessings? They are only for Mashenka the lady, and for the wives of the factory owners.

Early in the morning before the darkness has given way to dawn and while Mashenka the lady is still having sweet dreams, Mashenka the laundress gets up from her narrow bed and goes into the damp, dark laundry. She is greeted by the fusty smell of dirty linen; she slips around on the wet floor; yesterday's puddles still have not dried. It is not of her own free will that Masha slaves away in the laundry, she is driven by that tireless overseer – need. Masha's husband is a worker, and his pay packet is so small two people could not possibly keep alive on it. And so in silence, gritting her teeth, she stands over the tub until the very last possible day, right up until the birth. Do not be mistaken into thinking that Masha the laundress has "iron health" as the ladies like to say when they are talking about working women. Masha's legs are heavy with swollen veins, through standing at the tub for such long periods. She can walk only slowly and with difficulty. There are bags under her eyes, her arms are puffed up and she has had no proper sleep for a long time.

The baskets of wet linen are often so heavy that Masha has to lean against the wall to prevent herself from falling. Her head swims and everything becomes dark in front of her eyes. It often feels as if there is a huge rotten tooth lodged at the back of her spine, and that her legs are made of lead. If only she could lie down for an hour . . . have some rest . . . but working women are not allowed to do such things. Such pamperings are not for them. For, after all, they are not ladies. Masha puts up with her hard lot in silence. The only "sacred" women are those expectant mothers who are not driven by that relentless taskmaster, need.

Masha the maid

Mashenka the lady needs another servant. The master and mistress take in a lass from the country. Mashenka the lady likes the girl's ringing laughter and the plait that reaches down below her knee, and the way the girl flies around the house like a bird on the wing

and tries to please everyone. A gem of a girl. They pay her three rubles a month and she does enough work for three people. The lady is full of praise.

Then the factory director begins to glance at the girl. His attentions grow. The girl does not see the danger; she is inexperienced, unsophisticated. The master gets very kind and loving. The doctor has advised him not to make any demands on his lady-wife. Quiet, he says, is the best medicine. The factory director is willing to let her give birth in peace, as long as he does not have to suffer. The maid is also called Masha. Things can easily be arranged; the girl is ignorant, stupid. It is not difficult to frighten her. She can be scared into anything. And so Masha gets pregnant. She stops laughing and begins to look haggard. Anxiety gnaws at her heart day and night.

Masha the lady finds out. She throws a scene. The girl is given twenty-four hours to pack her bags. Masha wanders the streets. She has no friends, nowhere to go. Who is going to employ "that kind of a girl" in any "honest" house? Masha wanders without work, without bread, without help. She passes a river. She looks at the dark waves and turns away shivering. The cold and gloomy river terrifies her, but at the same time seems to beckon.

Masha the dye-worker

There is confusion in the factory's dye department; a woman worker has been carried out looking as if she is dead. What has happened to her? Was she poisoned by the steam? Could she no longer bear the fumes? She is no newcomer. It is high time she got used to the factory poison.

"It is absolutely nothing," says the doctor. "Can't you see? She is pregnant. Pregnant women are likely to behave in all sorts of strange ways. There is no need to give in to them."

So they send the woman back to work. She stumbles like a drunkard through the workshop back to her place. Her legs are numb and refuse to obey her. It is no joke working ten hours a day, day after day, amidst the toxic stench, the steam and the damaging fumes. And there is no rest for the working mother, even when the ten hours are over. At home there is her old blind mother waiting for her dinner, and her husband returns from his factory tired and hungry. She has to feed them all and look after them all. She is the first to get up in the mornings, she's on her legs from sunrise, and she is the last to get to sleep. And then to crown it they have introduced overtime. Things are going well at the factory; the owner is raking in the profits with both hands.

He only gives a few extra kopeks for overtime, but if you object, you know the way to the gates. There are, heaven be praised, enough unemployed in the world. Masha tries to get leave, by applying to the director himself.

"I am having my baby soon. I must get everything ready. My children are tiny and there is the housework; and then I have my old mother to look after."

But he will not listen. He is rude to her and humiliates her in front of the other workers. "If I started giving every pregnant woman time off, it would be simpler to close the factory. If you didn't sleep with men you wouldn't get pregnant."

So Masha the dye-worker has to labour on until the last minute. That is how much bourgeois society esteems motherhood.

Childbirth

For the household of Masha the lady the birth is a big event. It is almost a holiday. The house is a flurry of doctors, midwives and nurses. The mother lies in a clean, soft bed. There are flowers on the tables. Her husband is by her side; letters and telegrams are delivered. A priest gives thanksgiving prayers. The baby is born healthy and strong. That is not surprising. They have taken such care and made such a fuss of Masha.

Masha the laundress is also in labour. Behind the calico curtain, in the corner of a room full of other people. Masha is in pain. She tries to stifle her moaning, burying her head in the pillow. The neighbours are all working people and it would not do to deprive them of their sleep. Towards morning the midwife arrives. She washes and tucks up the baby and then hurries off to another birth. Mashenka is now alone in the room. She looks at the baby. What a thin little mite. Skinny and wrinkled. Its eyes seem to reproach the mother for having given birth at all. Mashenka looks at him and cries silently so as not to disturb the others.

Masha the maid gives birth to her child under a fence in a suburban backstreet. She enquired at a maternity home, but it was full. She knocked at another but they would not accept her, saying she needed various bits of paper with signatures. She gives birth; she walks on. She walks and staggers. She wraps the baby in a scarf. Where can she go? There is nowhere to go. She remembers the dark river, terrifying and yet fascinating. In the morning the policeman drags a body out of the river. That is how bourgeois society respects motherhood.

The baby of Masha the dye-worker is stillborn. It has not

managed to survive the nine months. The steam the mother inhales at the factory has poisoned the child while it was in the womb. The birth was difficult. Masha herself was lucky to come through alive. But by the evening of the following day she is already up and about, getting things straight, washing and doing the cooking. How can it be otherwise? Who else will look after Masha's home and organise the household? Who would see that the children were fed? Masha the lady can lie in bed for nine days on doctor's orders, for she has a whole establishment of servants to dance round her. If Masha the dye-worker develops a serious illness from going to work so soon after the birth and cripples herself as a result, that is just too bad.

There is no one to look after the working mother. No one to lift the heavy burdens from the shoulders of these tired women. Motherhood, they say, is sacred. But that is only true in the case of Masha the lady.

The cross of motherhood

For Masha the lady, motherhood is a joyful occasion. In a bright, tidy nursery the factory owner's heir grows up under the eye of various nannies and the supervision of a doctor. If Masha the lady has too little milk of her own or does not want to spoil her figure, a wet-nurse can be found. Masha the lady amuses herself with the baby and then goes out visiting, goes shopping, or to the theatre, or to a ball. There is someone at hand to look after the baby. Motherhood is amusing, it is entertainment for Masha the lady.

For the other Mashas, the working women – the dyers, weavers, laundresses and the other hundreds and thousands of working-class women – motherhood is a cross. The factory siren calls the woman to work but her child is fretting and crying. How can she leave it? Who will look after it? She pours the milk into a bottle and gives the child to the old woman next door or leaves her young daughter in charge. She goes off to work, but she never stops worrying about the child. The little girl, well-intentioned but ignorant, might try feeding her brother porridge or bits of bread.

Masha the lady's baby looks better every day. Like white sugar or a firm rosy apple; so strong and healthy. The children of the factory worker, the laundress and the craft-worker grow thinner with every day. At nights the baby curls up small and cries. The doctor comes and scolds the mother for not breast-feeding the child or for not feeding it properly. "And you call yourself a mother. Now you have only yourself to blame if the baby dies." The hundreds and thousands of working

mothers do not try to explain themselves. They stand with bent heads, furtively wiping away the tears. Could they tell the doctor of the difficulties they face? Would he believe them? Would he understand?

They die like flies

Children are dying. The children of working men and women die like flies. One million graves. One million sorrowing mothers. But whose children die? When death goes harvesting spring flowers, whose children fall to the scythe? As one would imagine, death gathers the poorest harvest amongst the wealthy families where the children live in warmth and comfort and are suckled on the milk of their mother or wet-nurse. In the families of royalty, only six or seven of every hundred new-born children die. In the workers' families, from thirty to forty-five die. In all countries where the capitalists control the economy and the workers sell their labour power and live in poverty, the percentage of babies to die in early childhood is very high. In Russia the figures are higher than anywhere else. Here are the comparative figures for the number of children that survive early childhood: Norway 93%, Switzerland 89%, England 88%, Finland 88%, France 86%, Austria 80%, Germany 80%, Russia 72%. But there are several provinces in Russia, especially those with many factories, where 54% of children die at birth. In the areas of the big cities where the rich live, child mortality is only 8-9%; in working-class areas the figure is 30-31%. Why do the children of the proletariat die in such numbers? To grow healthy and strong a young child needs fresh air, warmth, sun, cleanliness and careful attention. It needs to be breast-fed; its mother's milk is its natural food and will help it grow and grow strong. How many children of working-class families have all the things we have listed?

Death makes a firm place for itself in the homes of working-class families because such families are poor, their homes are overcrowded and damp, and the sunlight does not reach the basement; because where there are too many people, it is usually dirty; and because the working-class mother does not have the opportunity to care for her children properly. Science has established that artificial feeding is the worst enemy of the child: five times more children fed on cow's milk and fifteen times more children fed with other foods die than those who are breast-fed. But how is the woman who works outside the home, at the factory or in a workshop to breast-feed her child? She is lucky if the money stretches to buying cow's milk; that does not happen all the time. And what sort of milk do the tradesmen sell to working mothers anyway? Chalk mixed with water. Consequently, 60% of the babies that

die, die from diseases of the stomach. Many others die from what the doctors like to call "the inability to live": the mother worn out by her hard physical labour gives birth prematurely, or the child is poisoned by the factory fumes while still in the womb. How can the woman of the working class possibly fulfil her maternal obligations?

Work and maternity

There was a time not so long ago, a time that our grandmothers remember, when women were only involved in work at home: in housework and domestic crafts. The women of the non-property-owning classes were not idle, of course. The work around the house was hard. They had to cook, sew, wash, weave, keep the linen white and work in the kitchen garden and in the fields. But this work did not tear the women away from the cradle; there were no factory walls separating her from her children. However poor the woman was, her child was in her arms. Times have changed. Factories have been set up; workshops have been opened. Poverty has driven women out of the home; the factory has pulled them in with its iron claws. When the factory gates slam behind her, a woman has to say farewell to maternity, for the factory has no mercy on the pregnant woman or the young mother.

When a woman works day in day out over a sewing machine, she develops a disease of the ovaries. When she works at a weaving or spinning factory, a rubber or china works or a lead or chemical plant, she and her baby are in danger of being poisoned by noxious fumes and by contact with harmful substances. When a woman works with lead or mercury, she becomes infertile or her children are stillborn. When she works at a cigarette or tobacco factory, the nicotine in her milk may poison her child. Pregnant women can also maim or kill their children by carrying heavy loads, standing for long hours at a bench or counter, or hurrying up and downstairs at the whim of the lady of the house. There is no dangerous and harmful work from which working women are barred. There is no type of industry which does not employ pregnant women or nursing mothers. Given the conditions in which working women live their work in production is the grave of maternity.

Is there a solution to the problem?

If children are to be stillborn, born crippled or born to die like flies, is there any point in the working woman becoming pregnant? Are all the trials of childbirth worthwhile if the working woman has to abandon her children to the winds of chance when they are still so tiny? However much she wants to bring her child up properly, she does not

have the time to look after it and care for it. Since this is the case, is it not better simply to avoid maternity?

Many working women are beginning to think twice about having children. They have not got the strength to bear the cross. Is there a solution to the problem? Do working women have to deprive themselves of the last joy that is left them in life? Life has hurt her, poverty gives her no peace, and the factory drains her strength; does this mean that the working woman must give up the right to the joys of having children? Give up without a fight? Without trying to win the right which nature has given every living creature and every dumb animal? Is there an alternative? Of course there is, but not every working woman is yet aware of it.

What is the alternative?

Imagine a society, a people, a community, where there are no longer Mashenka ladies and Mashenka laundresses. Where there are no parasites and no hired workers. Where all people do the same amount of work and society in return looks after them and helps them in life. Just as now the Mashenka ladies are taken care of by their relatives, those who need more attention – the woman and children – will be taken care of by society, which is like one large, friendly family. When Mashenka, who is now neither a lady nor a servant but simply a citizen, becomes pregnant, she does not have to worry about what will happen to her or her child. Society, that big happy family, will look after everything.

A special home with a garden and flowers will be ready to welcome her. It will be so designed that every pregnant woman and every woman who has just given birth can live there joyfully in health and comfort. The doctors in this society-family are concerned not just about preserving the health of the mother and child but about relieving the woman of the pain of childbirth. Science is making progress in this field, and can help the doctor here. When the child is strong enough, the mother returns to her normal life and takes up again the work that she does for the benefit of the large family-society. She does not have to worry about her child. Society is there to help her. Children will grow up in the kindergarten, the children's colony, the creche and the school under the care of experienced nurses. When the mother wants to be with her children, she only has to say the word; and when she has no time, she knows they are in good hands. Maternity is no longer a cross. Only its joyful aspects remain; only the great happiness of being a mother, which at the moment only the Mashenka ladies enjoy.

But such a society, surely, is only to be found in fairy tales? Could such a society ever exist? The science of economics and the history of society and the state show that such a society must and will come into being. However hard the rich capitalists, factory-owners, landowners and men of property fight, the fairy-tale will come true. The working class all over the world is fighting to make this dream come true. And although society is as yet far from being one happy family, although there are still many struggles and sacrifices ahead, it is at the same time true that the working class in other countries has made great gains. Working men and women are trying to lighten the cross of motherhood by getting laws passed and by taking other measures.

How can the law help?

The first thing that can be done and the first thing that working men and women are doing in every country is to see that the law defends the working mother. Since poverty and insecurity are forcing women to take up work, and since the number of women out working is increasing every year, the very least that can be done is to make sure that hired labour does not become the "grave of maternity". The law must intervene to help women to combine work and maternity.

Men and women workers everywhere are demanding a complete ban on night work for women and young people, an eight-hour day for all workers, and a ban on the employment of children under sixteen years of age. They are demanding that young girls and boys over sixteen years of age be allowed to work only half the day. This is important, especially from the point of view of the future mother, since between the years of sixteen and eighteen the girl is growing and developing into a woman. If her strength is undermined during these years her chances of healthy motherhood are lost forever.

The law should state categorically that working conditions and the whole work situation must not threaten a woman's health; harmful methods of production should be replaced by safe methods or completely done away with; heavy work with weights or foot-propelled machines etc. should be mechanised; workrooms should be kept clean and there should be no extremes of temperature; toilets, washrooms and dining rooms should be provided, etc. These demands can be won – they have already been encountered in the model factories – but the factory-owners do not usually like to fork out the money. All adjustments and improvements are expensive, and human life is so cheap.

A law to the effect that women should sit wherever possible is very important. It is also vital that substantial and not merely nominal

fines are levied against factory owners who infringe the law. The job of seeing that the law is carried out should be entrusted not only to the factory inspectors but also to representatives elected by the workers.

Maternity protection

The law must protect the mother. Even now, Russian law (Article 126: "conditions in industry") gives working women in large factories the right to four weeks' leave at childbirth. This, of course, is not enough. In Germany, France and Switzerland, for example, the mother has the right to eight weeks' leave without losing her job. This, however, is not enough either. The workers' party demands for women a break of sixteen weeks: eight before and eight after the birth. The law should also stipulate that the mother has the right to time off during the working day to feed her child. This demand has already become law in Italy and Spain. The law must require that creches be built and other adequately heated rooms be provided by the factories and workshops, where babies can be breast-fed.

Maternity insurance

However, it is not sufficient for the law to protect the mother merely by seeing that she does not have to work during the period of childbirth. It is essential that society guarantees the material well-being of the woman during pregnancy. It would not be much of a "rest" for the woman if she were simply prevented from earning her daily bread for sixteen weeks. That would be dooming the woman to certain death. The law must therefore not only protect the woman at work but must also initiate, at state expense, a scheme of maternity benefits.

Such security or maternity insurance has already been introduced in fourteen countries: Germany, Austria, Hungary, Luxembourg, England, Australia, Italy, France, Norway, Serbia, Rumania, Bosnia, Herzegovina and Russia. In eleven countries, including Russia, the working woman insures herself at an insurance bureau, paying weekly contributions. In return the bureau pays out benefits money (the amount varies from country to country, but nowhere exceeds the full wage) and also provides the assistance of a doctor and midwife. In Italy the working woman pay her dues and receives help from special maternity bureaux. Further contributions are paid by the owner of the factory where she works, and by the state. Even in this case, however, the working woman has to shoulder the main financial burden. In France and Australia the working woman does not have to take out any kind of insurance policy. Any woman, married or unmarried, is entitled to

receive help from the state if she needs it. In France she receives benefits over a period of eight weeks (twenty to fifty kopeks a day, sometimes more), besides help from a doctor and a midwife. In Australia she is given a lump sum worth fifty rubles. In France a system of "substitute housekeepers" has also been organised. Towards the end of a woman's pregnancy, a friend or neighbour who has attended the free courses on the care of pregnant women and young children comes in to help. She continues to make daily visits until the mother is well enough to get up and about again; she tidies the house, cooks dinner, looks after the baby and is paid for this work by the bureau. In France, Switzerland, Germany and Rumania the mother also receives benefits from the insurance bureau during the period she is breast-feeding her child. The first steps have thus been made towards providing security for mothers.

What are the workers demanding?

All that is being done at the moment is, of course, too little. The working class is trying to see that society takes upon itself the difficulties of childbirth. The working class wants to ensure that the law and the state shoulder the most pressing worries of the working woman – her material and financial worries. Although the working class realises that only a new society, the large and friendly family mentioned earlier, will take upon itself the full care of the mother and child, it is possible even now to ease the life of the working-class mother. Much has already been won. But we have to struggle on. If we work together we shall win even more.

The workers' party in every country demands that there should be maternity insurance schemes that cover all women irrespective of the nature of their job, no matter whether a woman is a servant, a factory worker, a craftswoman or a poor peasant woman. Benefits must be provided before and after birth, for a period of sixteen weeks. A woman should continue receiving benefits if the doctor finds that she has not sufficiently recovered or that the child is not sufficiently strong. The woman must receive the full benefit even if the child dies or the birth is premature. Benefits must be one and a half times higher than the woman's normal wage; when a woman has no job she should receive one and a half times the average wages of women in that area. It should also be written into the law – and this is very important – that benefits be no lower than one ruble a day for large towns and seventy-five kopeks a day for small towns and villages. Otherwise, if a woman's wage were thirty kopeks, she would receive only forty-five kopeks. And can a mother and child be expected to live properly on forty-five kopeks a day? Can

a mother get everything she needs for life and health with forty-five kopeks? The mother should also be drawing benefits from the bureau for the entire period she is breast-feeding her child, and for not less than nine months. The size of the benefit should be about one half the normal wage.

Benefits should thus be paid out both before and after birth, and should be paid directly into the hands of the mother or some person authorised by her. The right to receive benefits must be established without any of the conditions which are in force at the moment. According to our Russian law, for example, a woman must have been a member of the bureau for three months in order to be eligible. A woman must be guaranteed the free services of a doctor and midwife and the help of a "substitute housewife" as organised in France and to some extent in Germany and England.

Responsibility for ensuring that the law is observed and that the woman in childbirth receives everything to which she is entitled must lie with delegates elected from among the working women. Pregnant and nursing mothers must have the legal right to receive free milk and, where necessary, clothes for the new baby at the expense of the town or village. The workers' party also demands that the town, zemstvo or insurance bureau build creches for young children at each factory. The money for this should be supplied by the factory owner, the town or the zemstvo. These creches must be organised so that each nursing mother can easily visit and feed her baby in the breaks from work that the law allows. The creche must be run not by philanthropic ladies but by the working mothers themselves.

The town, zemstvo or insurance bureau must, at its own expense, also build a sufficient number of: (i) Maternity homes. (ii) Homes for pregnant and nursing mothers who are alone and have no work (these already exist in France, Germany and Hungary). (iii) Free medical consultations for mothers and young children, so that the doctor can observe the course of pregnancy, give advice and instruct the mother in child-care. (iv) Clinics for sick children such as have been built by the Women's Labour League in England. (v) Kindergartens where a mother can leave her young children – the two to five-year olds – while she is at work. At the moment the mother returns from work tired and exhausted, needing peace and quiet; and immediately she has to start work again coping with her hungry, unwashed and untidy children. It makes all the difference for the mother to call for and collect her children well-fed, clean and happily full of news, and to have her older ones, who have been taught to help at the kindergarten and are proud

of their know-how, giving a hand around the house. (vi) Entrance-free courses on child-care for young girls and mothers. (vii) Free breakfasts and dinners for pregnant and nursing women, a service which has already been started in France.

These measures must not be stamped with the bitter label of "philanthropy". Every member of society – and that means every working woman and every citizen, male and female – has the right to demand that the state and community concern itself with the welfare of all. Why do people form a state, if not for this purpose? At the moment there is no government anywhere in the world that cares for its children. Working men and women in all countries are fighting for a society and government that will really become a big happy family, where all children will be equal and the family will care equally for all. Then maternity will be a different experience, and death will cease to gather such an abundant harvest among the new-born.

What must every working woman do?

How are all these demands to be won? What action must be taken? Every working-class woman, every woman who reads this pamphlet must throw off her indifference and begin to support the working-class movement, which is fighting for these demands and is shaping the old world into a better future where mothers will no longer weep bitter tears and where the cross of maternity will become a great joy and a great pride. We must say to ourselves, "There is strength in unity"; the more of us working women join the working-class movement, the greater will be our strength and the quicker we will get what we want. Our happiness and the life and future of our children are at stake.

From the Commissariat of Social Welfare

Document no. 1247, 31 January 1918

Through the ignorance and backwardness of an oppressed people and the inaction and indifference of a class government, two million young lives have ended in Russia every year almost before they began. Every year two million suffering mothers have wept tears of grief and with their blistered hands filled in the early graves of these young children who should never have died, who were the innocent victims of a deformed state system. After a search that has lasted centuries, human thought has at last discovered the radiant epoch where the working class, with its own hands, can freely construct that form of maternity protection which will preserve the child for the mother and the mother for the child. Capitalist morality allowed the existence of children's homes with their incredible overcrowding and high mortality rate, forced women to suckle the children of others and to foster out their own, and trampled on the emotions of the working mother, turning the citizeness-mother into the role of a dumb animal to be milked. Russia is fortunate that all these nightmares have, with the victory of the workers and peasants, disappeared into the black gloom of the past. A morning as pure and bright as the children themselves has dawned.

The new Soviet Russia calls all you working women, you working mothers with your sensitive hearts, you bold builders of a new social life, you teachers of the new attitudes, you children's doctors and midwives, to devote your minds and emotions to building the great edifice that will provide social protection for future generations. From the date of publication of this decree, all large and small institutions under the commissariat of social welfare that serve the child, from the children's home in the capital to the modest village creche, shall be merged into one government organisation and placed under the department for the protection of maternity and childhood. As an integral part of the total number of institutions connected with pregnancy and maternity, they shall continue to fulfil the single common task of creating citizens who are strong both mentally and physically. The Petrograd children's home, with all its branches, will be included in the organisation under its new name, the "Palace of Childhood", and will serve as the all-Russian organisation for the protection of childhood, an institution upon which

others will be modelled. The Moscow children's home and the "Moscow Institute of Maternity" will work jointly under the name "Moscow Institute of Childhood".

For the rapid elaboration and introduction of the reforms necessary for the protection of childhood in Russia, commissions are being organised under the auspices of the departments of maternity and childhood. Representatives of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, workers' organisations and specialists interested in questions of the social protection of childhood are included on the commissions. The commissions must base their work on the following main principles:

1. The preservation of the mother for the child: milk from the mother's breast is invaluable for the child.
2. The child must be brought up in the enlightened and understanding atmosphere provided by the socialist family.
3. Conditions must be created which permit the development of the child's physical and mental powers and the child's keen comprehension of life.

People's Commissar, **A.Kollontai.**

Member of the collegiate directing the department for the protection of maternity and childhood, **N.Korolev.**

Secretary, **Tsvetkov.**

From

The Labour of Women in the revolution of the Economy

In its search for new forms of economy and of living which meet the interests of the proletariat, the Soviet republic has inevitably committed a number of mistakes, and has a number of times had to alter and correct its line. But in the sphere of social upbringing and the protection of motherhood, the labour republic from the first months of its existence has marked out the right direction for developments to take. And in this sphere a deep and fundamental revolution in morals and attitudes is being achieved. In this country, where private property has been abolished and where politics is dictated by the desire to raise the level of the general economy, we can now deal in our stride with problems that were insoluble under the bourgeois system.

Soviet Russia has approached the question of protecting motherhood by keeping in view the solution to the basic problem of the labour republic – the development of the productive forces of the country, the raising and restoration of production. In order to carry out the job in hand it is necessary, in the first place, to tap the tremendous forces engaged in unproductive labour and use all available resources effectively; and, in the second place, to guarantee the labour republic an uninterrupted flow of fresh workers in the future, i.e. to guarantee the normal increase in population.

As soon as one adopts this point of view, the question of the emancipation of women from the burden of maternity solves itself. A labour state establishes a completely new principle: care of the younger generation is not a private family affair, but a social-state concern. Maternity is protected and provided for not only in the interests of the woman herself, but still more in the interests of the tasks before the national economy during the transition to a socialist system: it is necessary to save women from an unproductive expenditure of energy on the family so that this energy can be used efficiently in the interests of the collective; it is necessary to protect their health in order to guarantee the labour republic a flow of healthy workers in the future. In the bourgeois state it is not possible to pose the question of maternity in this way; class contradictions and the lack of unity between the interests

of private economies and the national economy hinder this. In a labour republic, on the other hand, where the individual economies are dissolving into the general economy and where classes are disintegrating and disappearing, such a solution to the question of maternity is demanded by life, by necessity. The labour republic sees woman first and foremost as a member of the labour force, as a unit of living labour; the function of maternity is seen as highly important, but as a supplementary task and as a task that is not a private family matter but a *social* matter.

"Our policy on the protection of maternity and childhood," as Vera Pavlovna Lebedeva correctly notes, "is based on the picture of woman in the work process, which we keep constantly before our mind's eye."

But in order to give woman the possibility of participating in productive labour without violating her nature or breaking with maternity, it is necessary to take a second step; it is necessary for the collective to assume all the cares of motherhood that have weighed so heavily on women, thus recognising that the task of bringing up children ceases to be a function of the private family and becomes a social function of the state. Maternity begins to be seen in a new light. Soviet power views maternity as a social task. Soviet power, basing itself on this principle, has outlined a number of measures to shift the burden of motherhood from the shoulders of women to those of the state. Soviet power takes responsibility for the care of the baby and the material provision of the child, through the sub-department of the Protection of Motherhood and Childhood (headed by comrade V.P.Lebedeva) and the section of Narkompros (the Commissariat of Education) which deals with social upbringing.

The principle that Soviet power accepts in tackling the problem is that the mother be relieved of the cross of motherhood, and be left with the smile of joy which arises from the contact of the woman with her child. Of course, this principle is far from having been realised. In practice we lag behind our intentions. In our attempts to construct new forms of life and living, to emancipate the labouring woman from family obligations, we are constantly running up against the same obstacles: our poverty, and the devastation of the economy. But a foundation has been laid, the signposts are in place; our task is to follow the directions firmly and decisively.

The labour republic does not limit itself to financial provisions for motherhood and the distribution of benefits. It aims, above all, to transform the conditions of life in order to make it fully possible for a woman to combine motherhood and social labour and to preserve the

baby for the republic, surrounding it with the necessary care and attention. From the very first months of the existence of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia, worker and peasant power has been striving to cover the country with a network of institutions for the protection of motherhood and the social upbringing of children. The mother and the child became a special object of concern in Soviet politics. During the first months of the revolution, when I held the position of People's Commissar of Social Welfare, I considered it to be my main task to chart the course that the labour republic should adopt in the sphere of protecting the interests of woman as a labour unit and as a mother.

It was at this time that the board which deals with the protection of motherhood was set up and began to organise model "palaces of motherhood". Since then, comrade Vera Pavlovna Lebedeva has worked ably and energetically, and the cause of the protection of motherhood has flourished and established firm roots. From the early stages of the working woman's pregnancy, she receives the assistance of Soviet power. Consultation centres for pregnant and nursing mothers are now to be found across the length and breadth of Russia. In tsarist times only six consultation centres existed; now we have about two hundred such centres, and a hundred and thirty-eight milk kitchens.

But of course, the most important task is to relieve the working mother of the unproductive labour involved in ministering to the physical needs of the child. Maternity does not in the least mean that one must oneself change the nappies, wash the baby or even be by the cradle. The social obligation of the mother is above all to give birth to a healthy baby. The labour republic must therefore provide the pregnant woman with the most favourable possible conditions; and the woman for her part must observe all the rules of hygiene during her pregnancy, remembering that in these months she no longer belongs to herself, she is serving the collective, "producing" from her own flesh and blood a new unit of labour, a new member of the labour republic. The woman's second obligation is to *breast-feed her baby;* only when she has done this does the woman have the right to say that she has fulfilled her obligations. The other tasks involved in caring for the younger generation can be carried out by the collective. Of course the maternal instinct is strong, and there is no need to stifle it. But why should this instinct be narrowly limited to the love and care of one's own child? Why not allow this instinct, which for the labour republic has valuable potential, the opportunity to develop vigorously and to reach its highest stage, where the woman not only cares for her own children but has a tender affection for all children?

The slogan advanced by the labour republic, "Be a mother not only to your child, but to all the children of the workers and peasants," must show the working woman a new approach to motherhood. There have been instances where a mother, even a communist mother, refuses to breast-feed a baby that is suffering from a lack of milk, only because it is not "her" baby. Is such behaviour permissible? Future society, with its communist emotion and understanding, will be as amazed at such egoistic and anti-social acts as we are when we read of the woman in prehistoric society who loved her own child but found the appetite to eat the child of another tribe. Or to take another case, examples of which abound: a mother deprives her baby of milk in order to save herself the bother of caring for it. And can we allow the number of foundlings in Soviet Russia to continue growing at the present rate?

These problems, it is true, derive from the fact that the question of motherhood is being tackled but has not yet been completely solved. In this difficult transition period there are hundreds of thousands of women who are exhausted by the dual burden of hired labour and maternity. There are not enough creches, children's homes and maternity homes, and the financial provisions do not keep pace with the price rises of goods on the free market. Consequently working women are afraid of motherhood and abandon their children. The growth in the number of foundlings, however, is also evidence that not all women in the labour republic have yet grasped the fact that motherhood *is not a private matter but a social obligation*. You who work amongst women will have to discuss this question and explain to working women, peasant women and office workers the obligations of motherhood in the new situation of the labour republic. At the same time, we obviously have to step up the work of developing the system of maternity protection and social upbringing. The easier it becomes for mothers to combine work and maternity, the fewer foundlings there will be.

We have already pointed out that maternity does not involve the mother always being with the child or devoting herself entirely to its physical and moral education. The obligation of the mother to her children is to ensure that a healthy and normal atmosphere is provided for their growth and development. In bourgeois society we always find that it is the children of the well-to-do classes who are healthy and flourishing, and never the children of the poor. How do we explain this? Is it because bourgeois mothers devoted themselves entirely to the education of their children? Not at all. Bourgeois mammas were very willing to place their children in the care of hired labourers: nannies and governesses. Only in poor families do mothers themselves bear all the

hardships of maternity; the children are with their mothers, but they die like flies. There can be no question of a normal upbringing: the mother does not have the time, and so the children are educated on the street. Every mother of the bourgeois class hurries to shift at least a part of child-care on to society; she sends the child to a kindergarten, to school or to a summer camp. The sensible mother knows that social education gives the child something that the most exclusive maternal love cannot give. In the prosperous circles of bourgeois society, where great significance is attached to giving the children a proper education in the bourgeois spirit, parents give their children into the care of trained nannies, doctors and pedagogues. Hired personnel take over the role of the mother in supervising the physical care and moral education of the child, and the mother is left with the one natural and inalienable right: to give birth to the child.

The labour republic does not take children away from their mothers by force as the bourgeois countries have made out in tales about the horrors of the "Bolshevik régime"; on the contrary, the labour republic tries to create institutions which would give all women, and not just the rich, the opportunity to have their children brought up in a healthy, joyful atmosphere. Instead of the mother anxiously thrusting her child into the care of a hired nanny, Soviet Russia wants the working or peasant woman to be able to go to work, calm in the knowledge that her child is safe in the expert hands of a creche, a kindergarten or a children's home.

In order to protect woman as the reproducer of the race, the labour republic has created "maternity homes" and has tried to open them wherever they are particularly needed. In 1921 we had a hundred and thirty-five such homes. These homes not only provide a refuge for the single woman in this most serious period of her life, but allow the married women to get away from home and family and the petty cares of the domestic round and to devote all her attention to regaining strength after the birth and to looking after her child in the first, most important weeks. Later on the mother is not essential to the child, but in the first weeks there is still, as it were, a physiological tie between mother and child, and during this period the separation of mother and child is not advisable. You know yourselves, comrades, how willingly working women and even the wives of important functionaries take advantage of the maternity homes, where they find loving attention and peace. We do not have to use agitational methods to persuade women to use the maternity homes. Our problem is that the material resources of Russia are so limited; we are poor, and this makes it difficult for us

to extend our network to cover the entire area of labour Russia with such "aid stations" for working women and peasant women. There are, unfortunately, still no maternity homes at all in the rural regions, and in general we have done least of all to help the peasant mothers. In fact, all we have done for them is to organise summer creches. This makes it easier for the peasant mother to work in the fields without her baby suffering in any way. In the course of 1921, 689 such creches, providing for 32,180 children, were opened. For mothers working in factories and offices, creches have been set up at factories and institutions, and also at a district and town level. I do not have to emphasise the great significance of these creches for the mothers. The trouble is that we do not have enough of them, and we cannot satisfy even a tenth of the demand for such aid centres.

The network of social education organisations which relieve mothers of the hard work involved in caring for children includes, apart from the creches and the children's homes which cater for orphans and foundlings up to the age of three, kindergartens for the three to seven year olds, children's "hearths" for children of school age, children's clubs, and finally children's house communes and children's work colonies. The social educational system also includes free meals for children of pre-school and school age. Vera Velichkina (Bonch-Bruyevich), a revolutionary to the end of her life, fought very hard for this measure, the introduction of which has as you know helped us a great deal in the hard years of the civil war, and has saved many children of the proletariat from emaciation and death from starvation. The concern of the state for children is also manifest in the provision of free milk, special food rations for the young, and clothes and footwear for children in need. All these projects are far from having been realised in full; in practice we have covered only a narrow section of the population. However, we have so far failed to relieve the couple from all the difficulties of bringing up children, not because we have taken the wrong course but because our poverty prevents us from fulfilling all that Soviet power has planned. The general direction of the policy on maternity is correct. But our lack of resources hinders us. So far, experiments have only been carried out at a fairly modest level. Even so, they have given results and have revolutionised family life, introducing fundamental changes in the relationships between the sexes. This is a question we will discuss in the following talk.

The task of Soviet power is thus to provide conditions for the woman where her labour will not be spent on non-productive work about the home and looking after children but on the creation of new wealth

for the state, for the labour collective. At the same time, it is important to preserve not only the interests of the woman but also the life of the child, and this is to be done by giving the woman the opportunity to combine labour and maternity. Soviet power tries to create a situation where a woman does not have to cling to a man she has grown to loathe only because she has nowhere else to go with her children, and where a woman alone does not have to fear her life and the life of her child. In the labour republic it is not the philanthropists with their humiliating charity but the workers and peasants, fellow-creators of the new society, who hasten to help the working woman and strive to lighten the burden of motherhood. The woman who bears the trials and tribulations of reconstructing the economy on an equal footing with the man, and who participated in the civil war, has a right to demand that in this most important hour of her life, at the moment when she presents society with a new member, the labour republic, the collective, should take upon itself the job of caring for the future of the new citizen.

Russia now has 524 protection of motherhood and social education sections. This is, nevertheless, insufficient. The transitional nature of the dictatorship places women in a particularly difficult situation; the old is destroyed but the new has not yet been created. The party and Soviet power must during this period pay increasing attention to the problem of maternity and the methods of solving it. If correct answers are found to these questions, not only women but also the national economy will gain.

I would like to say a few words about a question which is closely connected with the problem of maternity – the question of abortion, and Soviet Russia's attitude to it. On 20 November 1920 the labour republic issued a law abolishing the penalties that had been attached to abortion. What is the reasoning behind this new attitude? Russia, after all, suffers not from an overproduction of living labour but rather from a lack of it. Russia is thinly, not densely populated. Every unit of labour power is precious. Why then have we declared abortion to be no longer a criminal offence? Hypocrisy and bigotry are alien to proletarian politics. Abortion is a problem connected with the problem of maternity, and likewise derives from the insecure position of women (we are not speaking here of the bourgeois class, where abortion has other reasons – the reluctance to "divide" an inheritance, to suffer the slightest discomfort, to spoil one's figure or miss a few months of the season etc.).

Abortion exists and flourishes everywhere, and no laws or punitive measures have succeeded in rooting it out. A way round the

law is always found. But "secret help" only cripples women; they become a burden on the labour government, and the size of the labour force is reduced. Abortion, when carried out under proper medical conditions, is less harmful and dangerous, and the woman can get back to work quicker. Soviet power realises that the need for abortion will only disappear on the one hand when Russia has a broad and developed network of institutions protecting motherhood and providing social education, and on the other hand when women understand that *childbirth is a social obligation;* Soviet power has therefore allowed abortion to be performed openly and in clinical conditions.

Besides the large-scale development of motherhood protection, the task of labour Russia is to strengthen in women the healthy instinct of motherhood, to make motherhood and labour for the collective compatible and thus do away with the need for abortion. This is the approach of the labour republic to the question of abortion, which still faces women in the bourgeois countries in all its magnitude. In these countries women are exhausted by the dual burden of hired labour for capital and motherhood. In Soviet Russia the working woman and peasant woman are helping the Communist Party to build a new society and to undermine the old way of life that has enslaved women. As soon as woman is viewed as being essentially a labour unit, the key to the solution of the complex question of maternity can be found. In bourgeois society, where housework complements the system of capitalist economy and private property creates a stable basis for the isolated form of the family, there is no way out for the working woman. The emancipation of women can only be completed when a fundamental transformation of living is effected; and life-styles will change only with the fundamental transformation of all production and the establishment of a communist economy. The revolution in everyday life is unfolding before our very eyes, and in this process the liberation of women is being introduced in practice.

5

Crisis in the Party: The Workers' Opposition

With the conclusion of the world war, Kollontai's disagreements with the government's decision over Brest-Litovsk seemed to have little further relevance, and she had thus been willing, in mid-1920, to take up a position in the administration, as head of the Central Women's Department. Early in 1921, however, she became involved in another party controversy, this time in a much bigger way and over an issue which could far less easily be forgotten. The discussions which filled the newspapers and occupied the politically conscious public in the months preceding the tenth party congress were known as the "trade union" debate, but in fact it was the wider questions of the relations between the party and other organs of power, and the meaning of "dictatorship of the proletariat" in the specific conditions of Soviet Russia, that were at stake. Although it was not clearly understood at the time, a turning-point had been reached. The conclusion of the civil war allowed efforts to be directed towards the internal reconstruction of the country, but the absence or failure of the expected revolutions in Western Europe put paid to any hopes of assistance from the industrially advanced countries and raised instead the threat of a long-term hostile encirclement. In these circumstances, a reorientation of party policy was essential. But months of searching and uncertainty preceded the final decision to change course, and it was during this period that the problem of labour organisation came to the fore.

The Workers' Opposition had formed in the months preceding the tenth party congress: its members, rather than advocating a slight extension or restriction of trade-union rights, demanded the restructuring of the whole system of decision-making and administration, challenging in particular the right of the party to substitute for the working class and the wisdom of industrial policies which in their view blocked proletarian self-activity and spawned bureaucratism. Many of the ideas and criticisms they put forward were not new. On several occasions since 1917 minorities had opposed party policies on the grounds that they represented an unwarranted

abandonment of Bolshevik ideals, including the "democratic centralists" and the "left communists".

But though the Workers' Opposition to a certain extent followed the traditions of previous oppositional currents within the Bolshevik party, it was in one significant way different. While other groupings had drawn their support from the narrow confines of the upper echelons of the party, the Workers' Opposition was rooted in the unions; it could consequently command the support of rank-and-file party members, and could exert an influence over a far larger number of people. Because of the social composition of its adherents, and because of the crisis situation within Soviet Russia at that time, the Workers' Opposition was in a position to play a much more important role than previous oppositions.

There is no information available which might enable us to follow the evolution of Kollontai's thinking at this time; she was in Moscow, but did not take part in the public discussion on the trade unions and did not sign the theses of the Workers' Opposition published in **Pravda** on 25 January. It seems probable that she became involved in the controversy only late that month or in early February when, at the request perhaps of Shlyapnikov, she agreed to produce a longer and more detailed exposition of the group's platform for the congress – the document now known as "The Workers' Opposition" (pp. 159-99). Though she had always recognised the need for discipline, Kollontai had also always believed that the working class must be the instrument of its own liberation and that the party must encourage the creativity of the class. Her support for the Opposition was an affirmation of these beliefs, a statement of her political priorities. Earlier in 1920 she had written optimistically about future prospects, but now she stressed the hard lot of the working people and the indifference of people in positions of authority to their needs. Though Kollontai does not mention women's work in the pamphlet (which is strange, in view of her habitual eagerness to plug these issues), it is significant that among her examples of the tendency of the government apparatus to stifle initiative she lists the red tape which prevented the self-organisation of creches and canteens: it may well have been her unfruitful experience of working in the Women's Department that inspired Kollontai to launch her attack on party methods of work and on incipient bureaucracy.

In "The Workers' Opposition", Kollontai sought the reasons for the crisis in the war-shattered economy and in the difficulties faced in

an economically backward country, where the majority of the population were peasants and all the neighbouring capitalist nations wanted the downfall of the revolution. This was the analysis generally accepted. The existence of the various social groups, she continued, placed the party in a vulnerable position, and the class composition of the population inevitably became reflected in the party; the peasants and petty bourgeoisie found their spokespeople among the communists. Consequently, she maintained, the influence of the working class in the party was decreasing, worker members were losing contact with their class roots and could no longer be said to truly represent the interests of their class; there was a dangerous weakening of the link between class and party. At the congress the latter point was hotly debated, but the truth of her observations was upheld. At first party members had been inclined to brush aside allegations of bureaucracy, but when Zinoviev and then Lenin confirmed the correctness of the criticisms the point was accepted. Resolutions were accordingly passed at the tenth congress on the need to improve democracy within the party. The measures approved for this purpose included investigations to ascertain whether members had joined the party from genuine conviction or careerist ambition, and in the year following the congress a quarter of all party members were excluded from the ranks for failing to meet the standards set by the investigation panels.

The analysis put forward by Kollontai and the Workers' Opposition was thus in the main accepted; it was the conclusions they drew from this analysis which brought them under heavy attack from the majority of the party, and gained the group the labels of "petty bourgeois" and "syndicalist". Kollontai concluded that the process of bureaucratisation within the party had already resulted in "outright deviations of our Soviet policy", and that the abandonment of collective management was evidence that an orientation "consistent in principle and theory" had been deserted. Although she by no means ignored the role of the party, she emphasised the need for the workers themselves to become involved in economic and political decision-making.

It is impossible to read the debates of this period without our knowledge of the subsequent careers of the participants and of the subsequent history of the party intruding. We are struck by such statements in the pamphlet as "bureaucracy is our enemy, our scourge and the greatest danger to the future existence of the communist party itself", for bureaucracy has indeed proved the

greatest enemy and the greatest danger. But a real evaluation of the strength and wisdom of Kollontai's position must be based on an understanding of the size of the bureaucratic threat at that particular historical conjecture, and of the relation between bureaucratisation and party policy. It has sometimes been argued that the fact that the party was eventually overwhelmed by the forces of bureaucracy from within and violated its position as guardian of the proletarian dictatorship is proof of the correctness of Kollontai's criticisms of the general party line and of the essentially anti-working class nature of leninism. Others have pointed out that the Left Opposition of the mid-twenties also combined awareness of the process of degeneration in the party with awareness of mistakes the party had made over domestic and foreign affairs. If the oppositions were right in 1923 and 1927, was the Workers' Opposition not right in 1921?

Party policies in the period up to 1921, when the Workers' Opposition functioned, were not those the party would ideally have wished to have been taking, but in the circumstances they were those best suited to maintain the dictatorship of the proletariat. It was only the economic recovery which later resulted from the New Economic Policy that made possible the alternative policies proposed by subsequent oppositions. Kollontai was therefore right to stress that the lowering of standards within the party would hinder the implementation of socialist construction, but wrong to believe that the very policies of socialist construction had already been affected. Her talk of a forced advance, a pure proletarian policy and the immediate abolition of money and wages was clearly unrealistic at a time when production was down to 12.9 per cent of the 1913 level, and her call for an "All-Russian Congress of Producers" was obviously no solution to the problems at hand in a situation where the strength of the proletariat had been reduced by the ravages of world and civil war from three million to a demoralised and isolated half-million, and had been further diluted by the raw peasant recruits who replaced the traditional workers. The Workers' Opposition mistook the difficulties of implementing necessary policies for the abandonment of socialist ideals, and ended up expressing a naive utopianism. While her analysis of bureaucracy was extremely sensitive and allowed her to foresee the possibility that "the party may find itself without the foundation of the dictatorship, the party will remain by itself . . . in this lies the greatest danger to the revolution," her economic and political solutions were both

inadequate and misguided, and rendered the whole basis of her stand vulnerable to attack.

For this reason the observation of several writers, including R.V. Daniels [28] and Iring Fetscher[29], that Kollontai had much in common with Rosa Luxemburg must be treated with caution. It is certainly true that throughout her political life Kollontai insisted upon the participation of the masses and the importance of their self-activity, but these writers specifically try to connect Kollontai's ideas as a member of the Workers' Opposition to Luxemburg's criticisms of the Bolshevik party in the period immediately after the revolution. However, while the analysis in the pamphlet "The Workers' Opposition" is in the tradition of Luxemburg (and indeed of Lenin's **State and Revolution**), the solutions offered are in a very different tradition. Similarly, when Iring Fetscher suggests that Kollontai's adherence to the Workers' Opposition and her insistence on women's liberation are to be understood as the expression of "an unbroken emancipatory idealism which could not always adjust itself to external circumstances," he fails to draw the distinction between her analysis and her demands. Kollontai's critique of bureaucracy has obvious connections with her emphasis on the importance of the political awakening and political activity of women, but her stand for a forced march towards communism and the immediate transfer of direct power to the working class does not necessarily flow from the same source of political inspiration as her enthusiasm for the cause of women's liberation. In fact the episode of the Workers' Opposition illustrates the differences rather than the similarities between the two women, for whereas Rosa Luxemburg – alone among women in the socialist movement – had developed her theoretical gifts sufficiently to make a mark at both national and international level, Kollontai never entirely managed to overcome the sectoral nature of women's experience, nor to translate her own perceptions into political formulae. Thus, although her contribution to the socialist movement was in its own way as important as Luxemburg's, she was unsuccessful when it came to outlining a general course of revolutionary strategy, and this was ultimately to limit the development of her ideas on women's liberation.

Kollontai played a fairly minor part in the tenth party congress, and although she signed the "letter of the 22" presented by the Opposition to the Executive Committee of the Communist International in February 1922, hers was an added signature, not one of the original "22". She continued her association with the group,

however, and approved its criticisms of the New Economic Policy. Replacing grain requisitioning by a tax in kind, NEP gave peasants the opportunity to freely dispose of surplus and with this an incentive to extend the area of cultivated land. Instead of recognising that this policy, though it meant the reintroduction of capitalist practices, represented the only way that an economic base capable of guaranteeing the elimination of the dangers of bureaucracy could be built, the Workers' Opposition denounced the new policy as a measure taking the government further from a proletarian policy. Speaking at the third congress of the International in July 1921, Kollontai declared: "We, as marxists, know that only a communist system of production is really capable of moving forward and making the development of the productive forces easier. While the old system of production exists . . . there are no opportunities for the development of forces, and until there is, we cannot expect their further development."[30]

Lenin saw this attack by the Workers' Opposition upon the industrial and economic policies of the government, in the crisis situation that obtained within the country, as a threat to the existence of the workers' state. Whether this was in fact the case is open to question, but the depth of the economic and social chaos that gripped Soviet Russia can scarcely be exaggerated. Describing conditions in early 1921, Sorokin wrote: "The peasants had no seeds to sow and they had no incentive to industry. In the towns everything was slowing down to a death sleep. Nationalised factories, having no fuel, stopped operating. Railways were broken down. Buildings were falling into ruin."[31] Of the situation in 1922 he remarked, "the government was in a condition of collapse".[32] Given this situation, and given its sure popular base, Lenin felt that the Opposition might have unwittingly become a focus for the discontent of the masses and an instrument in the overthrow of workers' power. Lenin, from the very beginning of the trade-union debate, had been more conscious than anyone else of the instability of the régime; it was this understanding that led him to press for the greatest unity within the ranks of the party, and it was at his insistence that a secret resolution was passed at the tenth party congress banning factions. The Opposition was outlawed.

The history of the Opposition is indicative of the weakening of the Bolshevik party under the pressure of adverse circumstances; not only were many of the ideas of the Opposition naive and unworthy of members of a marxist party, but the other members

of the party reacted to the Opposition in a far from exemplary manner. There was plenty in the Opposition's programme to criticise legitimately, but the critics in their glee at so easy a prey overreached themselves. At the tenth party congress and elsewhere, the Opposition, and Kollontai in particular, had been criticised for positions they did not hold: Trotsky, for example, maintained in his speech at the third Comintern congress that Kollontai demanded specialists be dispensed with entirely. Her ambiguous stance on the question of the role of the party, and the uncertainty as to whether she envisaged a rapid or gradual transfer of direct power to the proposed All-Russian Congress of Producers, were not raised by the delegates; they preferred to employ terms such as "petty bourgeois" and "syndicalist", or to substitute name-calling for measured criticism. Lenin at one point declared that when he had read the thesis in Kollontai's pamphlet about power belonging to the producers, he did not bother to read any further, as the petty bourgeois, anarchistic character of the opposition had been amply demonstrated. Although Lenin certainly had read further (he did in fact make a careful criticism), his remark typified the mood of the congress. This failure of the party to distinguish clearly between the analysis and the conclusions of the Opposition had grave consequences, for the latter's criticisms of the bureaucracy were thereby obscured, and attention was deflected away from discussion of the measures to be taken to fight it. Bukharin, instead, made fun of the proposal that party members should spend some time in production in order not to lose contact with the working masses. Under such a scheme, he joked, the venerable and distinguished diplomat Chicherin would spend three months a year in the army, three months in a factory and three months in a sanatorium recovering from these exertions, leaving only three months a year for his duties abroad.

In this same speech[33] Bukharin read out an excerpt from an article Kollontai had contributed to **Kommunistka**, a review of a play she had seen several years previously while in Berlin. The play was set in the Middle Ages, and a statue of the Madonna which played a significant role throughout struck her as a symbol of "the highest essence of maternity". Kollontai would no doubt argue, comments Bukharin, that he, Bukharin, cannot understand such stuff because he is a man, but that even if he were transformed into a Nina Bukharina he would still disapprove of such "sentimental catholic banality". The important point was not whether Kollontai was right

in the article, but the fact that Bukharin had brought up an issue which had nothing to do with the debate at hand, with the sole intention of making her and the Opposition look foolish.

The Workers' Opposition

Before making clear what the cause is of the ever-widening break between the "Workers' Opposition" and the official point of view held by our directing centres, it is necessary to call attention to two facts:

1. The Workers' Opposition sprang from the depths of the industrial proletariat of Soviet Russia. It is an outgrowth not only of the unbearable conditions of life and labour in which seven million industrial workers find themselves, but it is also a product of vacillation, inconsistencies, and outright deviations of our Soviet policy from the early expressed class-consistent principles of the communist programme.
2. The Opposition did not originate in some particular centre, was not a fruit of personal strife and controversy, but, on the contrary, covers the whole extent of Soviet Russia and meets with a resonant response.

At present, there prevails an opinion that the whole root of the controversy arising between the Workers' Opposition and the numerous currents noticeable among the leaders consists exclusively in difference of opinions regarding the problems that confront the trade unions. This, however, is not true. The break goes deeper. Representatives of the Opposition are not always able clearly to express and define it, but as soon as some vital question of the reconstruction of our republic is touched upon, controversies arise concerning a whole series of cardinal economic and political questions.

For the first time, the two different points of view (as expressed by the leaders of our party and the representatives of our class-organised workers), found their reflection at the Ninth Congress of our party, when that body was discussing the question of "collective versus personal management in industry."

At that time, there was no opposition from any well-formed group, but it is very significant that collective management was favoured by all the representatives of the trade unions, while opposed to it were all the leaders of our party, who are accustomed to appraise all events from the institutional angle. They require a good deal of shrewdness and skill to placate the socially heterogeneous and the sometimes politically hostile aspirations of the different social groups of the population as expressed by proletarians, petty owners, peasantry, and bourgeoisie in the person of specialists, and pseudo-specialists, of all kinds and degrees.

Why was it that only the unions stubbornly defended the principle of collective management, even without being able to adduce scientific arguments in favour of it? And why was it that the specialists' supporters at the same time defended "one-man management"? The reason is that in this controversy, though both sides emphatically denied that there was a question of principle involved, two historically irreconcilable points of view had clashed. "One-man management" is a product of the individualist conception of the bourgeois class. "One-man management" is in principle an unrestricted, isolated, free will of one man, disconnected from the collective.

This idea finds its reflection in all spheres of human endeavour – beginning with the appointment of a sovereign for the state, and ending with a sovereign director of the factory. This is the supreme wisdom of bourgeois thought. The bourgeoisie do not believe in the power of a collective body. They like to whip the masses into an obedient flock, and drive them wherever their unrestricted will desires.

The working class and its spokesmen, on the contrary, realise that the new communist aspirations can be obtained only through the collective efforts of the workers themselves. The more the masses are developed in the expression of their collective will and common thought, the quicker and more complete will be the realisation of working class aspirations, for it will create a new, homogeneous, unified, perfectly-arranged communist industry. *Only those who are directly bound to industry can introduce into it animating innovations.*

Rejection of a principle – the principle of collective management in the control of industry – was a tactical compromise on behalf of our party, an act of adaptation; it was, moreover, an act of deviation from that class policy which we so zealously cultivated and defended during that first phase of the revolution.

Why did this happen? How did it happen that our party, matured and tempered in the struggle of the revolution, was permitted to be carried away from the direct road, in order to journey along the roundabout path of adaptation, formerly condemned severely and branded as "opportunism"?

The answer to this question we shall give later. Meanwhile we shall turn to the question: how did the Workers' Opposition form and develop?

The Ninth Congress of the Russian Communist Party was held in the spring of 1920. During the summer, the Opposition did not assert itself. Nothing was heard about it during the stormy debates that took place at the Second Congress of the Communist International. But deep

at the bottom, there was taking place an accumulation of experience, of critical thought. The first expression of this process, incomplete at the time, was at the party conference in September 1920. For a time, the thought preoccupied itself largely with rejections and criticisms. The Opposition had no well-formulated proposals of its own. But it was obvious that the party was entering into a new phase of its life. Within its ranks, "lower" elements demand freedom of criticism, loudly proclaiming that bureaucracy strangles them, leaves no freedom for activity or for manifestation of initiative.

The leaders of the party understood this undercurrent, and Comrade Zinoviev made many verbal promises as to freedom of criticism, widening of the scope of self-activity for the masses, persecution of leaders deviating from the principles of democracy, etc. A great deal was said and well said; but from words to deeds there is a considerable distance. The September conference, together with Zinoviev's much-promising speech, has changed nothing either in the party itself or in the life of the masses. The root from which the Opposition sprouts was not destroyed. Down at the bottom, a growth of inarticulate dissatisfaction, criticism and independence was taking place.

This inarticulate ferment was noted even by the party leader and it quite unexpectedly generated sharp controversies. It is significant that in the central party bodies, sharp controversies arose concerning the part that must be played by the trade unions. This, however, is only natural.

At present, this subject of controversy between the Opposition and the party leaders, while not being the only one, is still the cardinal point of our whole domestic policy.

Long before the Workers' Opposition had appeared with its theses and formed that basis on which, in its opinion, the dictatorship of the proletariat must rest, in the sphere of industrial reconstruction, the leaders in the party had sharply disagreed in their appraisal of the part that is to be played by the working-class organisations regarding the latter's participation in the reconstruction of industries on a communist basis. The central committee of the party split into groups. Comrade Lenin stood in opposition to Trotsky, while Bukharin took the middle ground.

Only at the Eighth Soviet Congress and immediately after did it become obvious that within the party itself there was a united group kept together primarily by the theses of principles concerning the trade unions. This group, the Opposition, having no great theoreticians, and in spite of a most resolute resistance from the most popular leaders of

the party, was growing strong and spreading all over labouring Russia. Was it so only in Petrograd and Moscow? Not at all. Even from the Donets basin, the Ural mountains, Siberia, and a number of other industrial centres came reports to the central committee that there also *the Workers' Opposition was forming and acting.*

It is true that not everywhere does the Opposition find itself in complete accord on all points with the workers of Moscow. At times there is much indefiniteness, pettiness and absurdity in the expressions, demands and motives of the Opposition. Even the cardinal points may differ. Yet there is everywhere one unalterable point – and this is the question: *who shall develop the creative powers in the sphere of economic reconstruction?* Shall it be purely class organs, directly connected by vital ties with the industries – that is, shall industrial unions undertake the work of reconstruction – or shall it be left to the Soviet machine which is separated from direct vital industrial activity and is mixed in its composition? This is the root of the break. The Workers' Opposition defends the first principle, while the leaders of the party, whatever their differences on various secondary matters, are in complete accord on the cardinal point, and defend the second principle.

What does this mean? This means that our party lives through its first serious crisis of the revolutionary period, and that the Opposition is not to be driven away by such a cheap name as "syndicalism", but that all comrades must consider this in all seriousness. Who is right, the leaders or the working masses endowed with a healthy class instinct?

Before considering the basic points of the controversy between the leaders of our party and the Workers' Opposition, it is necessary to find an answer to the question: how could it happen that our party – formerly strong, mighty and invincible because of its clear-cut and firm class policy – began to deviate from its programme?

The dearer the Communist Party is to us, just because it has made such a resolute step forward on the road to the liberation of the workers from the yoke of capital, the less right do we have to close our eyes to the mistakes of leading centres.

The power of the party must lie in the ability of our leading centres to detect the problems and tasks that confront the workers, and to pick up the tendencies, which they have been able to direct, so that the masses might conquer one more of the historical positions. So it was in the past, but it is no longer so at present. Our party not only reduces its speed, but more often "wisely" looks back and asks: "Have we not gone too far? Is this not the time to call a halt? Is it not wiser to be

more cautious and to avoid daring experiments unseen in the whole of history?"

What was it that produced this "wise caution" (particularly expressed in the distrust of the leading party centres towards the economic industrial abilities of the labour unions) – caution that has lately overwhelmed all our centres? Where is the cause?

If we begin diligently to search for the cause of the developing controversy in our party, it becomes clear that the party is passing through a crisis which was brought about by *three fundamental causes.*

The first main basic cause is the unfortunate environment in which our party must work and act. The Russian Communist Party must build communism and carry into life its programme:

(a) in the environment of complete destruction and breakdown of the economic structure;

(b) in the face of a never diminishing and ruthless pressure of the imperialist states and White Guards;

(c) to the working class of Russia has fallen the lot of realising communism, creating new communist forms of economy in an economically backward country with a preponderant peasant population, where the necessary economic prerequisites for socialisation of production and distribution are lacking, and where capitalism has not as yet been able to complete the full cycle of its development (from the unlimited struggle of competition of the first stage of capitalism to its highest form: the regulation of production by capitalist unions – the trusts).

It is quite natural that all these factors hinder the realisation of our programme (particularly in its essential part – in the reconstruction of industries on the new basis) and inject into our Soviet economic policy *diverse influences and a lack of uniformity.*

Out of this basic cause follow the two others. First of all, the economic backwardness of Russia and the domination of the peasantry within its boundaries create that diversity, and inevitably detract the practical policy of our party from the clear-cut *class direction, consistent in principle and theory.*

Any party standing at the head of a heterogeneous Soviet state is compelled to consider the aspirations of peasants with their petty-bourgeois inclinations and resentments towards communism, as well as lend an ear to the numerous petty-bourgeois elements, remnants of the former capitalists in Russia and to all kinds of traders, middlemen, petty officials etc. These have very rapidly adapted themselves to the Soviet institutions and occupy responsible positions in the centres, appearing in the capacity of agents of different commissariats etc. No wonder that

Zarupa, the People's Commissar of Supplies, at the Eighth Congress quoted figures which showed that in the service of the Commissariat of Supplies there were engaged 17 per cent of workers, 13 per cent of peasants, less than 20 per cent of specialists, and that of the remaining, more than 50 per cent were "tradesmen, salesmen, and similar people, in the majority even illiterate" (Zarupa's own words). In Zarupa's opinion this is a proof of their democratic constitution, even though they have nothing in common with the class proletarians, with the producers of all wealth, with the workers in factory and mill.

These are the elements – the petty-bourgeois elements widely scattered through the Soviet institutions, the elements of the middle class, with their hostility towards communism, and with their predilections towards the immutable customs of the past, with resentments and fears towards revolutionary acts. These are the elements that bring decay into our Soviet institutions, breeding there an atmosphere *altogether repugnant to the working class.* They are two different worlds and hostile at that. And yet we in Soviet Russia are compelled to persuade both ourselves and the working class that the petty-bourgeoisie and middle classes (not to speak of well-to-do peasants) can quite comfortably exist under the common motto: "All power to the Soviets", forgetful of the fact that in practical everyday life, the interests of the workers and those of the middle classes and peasantry imbued with petty-bourgeois psychology must inevitably clash, rending the Soviet policy asunder, and deforming its clear-cut class statutes.

Beside peasant-owners in the villages and burgher elements in the cities, our party in its Soviet state policy is forced to reckon with the influence exerted by the representatives of wealthy bourgeoisie now appearing in the form of specialists, technicians, engineers and former managers of financial and industrial affairs, who by all their past experience are bound to the capitalist system of production. They cannot even imagine any other mode of production, but the one which lies *within the traditional bounds of capitalist economics.*

The more Soviet Russia finds itself in need of specialists in the sphere of technique and management of production, the stronger becomes the influence of these elements, foreign to the working class, on the development of our economy. Having been thrown aside during the first period of the revolution, and being compelled to take up an attitude of watchful waiting or sometimes even open hostility towards the Soviet authorities, particularly during the most trying months (the historical sabotage by the intellectuals), this social group of brains in capitalist production, of servile, hired, well-paid servants of capital, acquires more

and more influence and importance in politics with every day that passes.

Do we need names? Every fellow worker, carefully watching our foreign and domestic policy, recalls more than one such name.

As long as the centre of our life remained at the military fronts, the influence of these gentlemen directing our Soviet policy, particularly in the sphere of industrial reconstruction, was comparatively negligible.

Specialists, the remnants of the past, by all their nature closely, unalterably bound to the bourgeois system that we aim to destroy, gradually began to penetrate into our Red Army, introducing there their atmosphere of the past (blind subordination, servile obedience, distinction, ranks, and the arbitrary will of superiors in place of class discipline, etc.). But their influence did not extend to the general political activity of the Soviet Republic.

The proletariat did not question their superior skill to direct military affairs, fully realising through their healthy class instinct that in military matters the working class as a class cannot express a new world, is powerless to introduce substantial changes into the military system – to reconstruct its foundation on a new class basis. Professional militarism – an inheritance of past ages – militarism and wars will have no place in communist society. The struggle will go on along other channels, will take quite different forms inconceivable to our imagination. Militarism lives through its last days, through the transitory epoch of dictatorship, and therefore it is only natural that the workers, as a class, could not introduce into the forms and systems anything new and conducive to the future development of society. Even in the Red Army, however, there were innovating touches of the working class. But the nature of militarism remained the same, and the direction of military affairs by the former officers and generals of the old army did not draw the Soviet policy in military matters away to the opposite side sufficiently for the workers to feel any harm to themselves or to their class interests.

In the sphere of national economy it is quite different however. Production, its organisation – this is the essence of communism. To debar the workers from the organisation of industry, to deprive them, that is, their individual organisations, of the opportunity to develop their powers in creating new forms of production in industry through their unions, to deny these expressions of the class organisation of the proletariat, while placing full reliance on the "skill" of specialists trained and taught to carry on production under a quite different system of production — is to jump off the rails of scientific marxist thought. That is, however, just the thing that is being done by the leaders of our party at present.

Taking into consideration the utter collapse of our industries while still clinging to the capitalist mode of production (payment for labour in money, variations in wages received according to the work done) our party leaders, in a fit of distrust in the creative abilities of workers' collectives, are seeking salvation from the industrial chaos. Where? In the hands of scions of the bourgeois-capitalist past. In businessmen and technicians, whose creative abilities in the sphere of industry are subject to the routine, habits and methods of the capitalist system of production and economy. They are the ones who introduce the ridiculously naïve belief that it is possible to bring about communism by bureaucratic means. *They* "decree" where it is now necessary to create and carry on research.

The more the military front recedes before the economic front, the keener becomes our crying need, the more pronounced the influence of that group which is not only inherently foreign to communism, but absolutely unable to develop the right qualities for introducing new forms of organising the work, of new motives for increasing production, of *new approaches to production and distribution*. All these technicians, practical men, men of business experience, who just now appear on the surface of Soviet life, bring pressure to bear upon the leaders of our party through and within the Soviet institutions by exerting their influence on economic policy.

The party, therefore, finds itself in a difficult and embarrassing situation regarding the control over the Soviet state. It is forced to lend an ear and to adapt itself to three economically hostile groups of the population, each different in social structure. The workers demand a clear-cut, uncompromising policy, a rapid, forced advance towards communism; the peasantry, with its petty-bourgeois proclivities and sympathies, demands different kinds of "freedom", including freedom of trade and non-interference in their affairs. The latter are joined in this demand by the burgher class in the form of "agents" of Soviet officials, commissaries in the army etc. who have already adapted themselves to the Soviet régime, and sway our policy towards petty-bourgeois lines.

As far as the centre is concerned, the influence of these petty-bourgeois elements is negligible. But in the provinces and in local Soviet activity, their influence is a great and harmful one. Finally, there is still another group of men, consisting of the former managers and directors of the capitalist industries. These are not the magnates of capital, like Ryabushinsky or Rublikov, whom the Soviet republic got rid of during the first phase of the revolution, but they are the most talented servants

of the capitalist system of production, the "brains and genius" of capitalism, its true creators and sponsors. Heartily approving the centralist tendencies of the Soviet government in the sphere of economics, well realising all the benefits of trustification and regulation of production (this, by the way, is being carried on by capital in all advanced industrial countries), they are striving for just one thing – they want this regulation to be carried on, not through the labour organisations (the industrial unions), but by themselves – acting now under the guise of Soviet economic institutions – the central industrial committees, industrial centres of the Supreme Council of National Economy, where they are already firmly rooted. The influence of these gentlemen on the "sober" state policy of our leaders is great, considerably greater than is desirable. This influence is reflected in the policy which defends and cultivates bureaucratism (with no attempts to change it entirely, but just to improve it). The policy is particularly obvious in the sphere of our foreign trade with the capitalist states, which is just beginning to spring up: *these commercial relations are carried on over the heads of the Russian as well as the foreign organised workers*. It finds its expression, also, in a whole series of measures restricting the self-activity of the masses and giving the initiative to the scions of the capitalist world.

Among all these various groups of the population, our party, by trying to find a middle ground, is compelled to steer a course which does not jeopardise the unity of the state interests. The clear-cut policy of our party, in the process of identifying itself with Soviet state institutions, is being gradually transformed into an upper-class policy, which in essence is nothing else but an adaptation of our directing centres to the heterogeneous and irreconcilable interests of a socially different, mixed, population. This adaptation leads to inevitable vacillation, fluctuations, deviations and mistakes. It is only necessary to recall the zigzag-like road of our policy towards the peasantry, which from "banking on the poor peasant", brought us to placing reliance on "the industrious peasant-owner". Let us admit that this policy is proof of the political soberness and "statecraft wisdom" of our directing centres. But the future historian, analysing without bias the stages of our domination, will find and point out that in this is evident "a dangerous digression" from the class line toward "adaptation" and a course full of harmful possibilities or results.

Let us again take the question of foreign trade. There exists in our policy an obvious duplicity. This is attested by the constant, unending friction between the Commissariat of Foreign Trade and the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. This friction is not of administrative

nature alone. Its cause lies deeper. And if the secret work of the directing centres were exposed to the view of rank and file elements, who knows what the controversy dividing the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs and the trade representatives abroad might lead to.

This seemingly administrative friction is essentially a serious, deep, social friction, concealed from the rank and file, and makes it absolutely necessary for Soviet politics to adapt to the three heterogeneous social groups of the population (workers, peasants and representatives of the former bourgeoisie). This constitutes *another cause bringing a crisis into our party.* And we cannot but pay attention to this cause. It is too characteristic, too pregnant with possibilities. It is therefore the duty of our party, on behalf of party unity and future activity, to ponder over this cause and to learn the necessary lessons from the widespread dissatisfaction generated by it in the rank and file.

As long as the working class, during the first period of the revolution, felt itself to be the only bearer of communism, there was perfect unanimity in the party. In the days immediately following the October revolution, none could even think of "ups" as something different from "downs", for in those days the advanced workers were busily engaged in realising point after point in our class-communist programme. The peasant who received the land did not at the time assert himself as a part of and a full-fledged citizen of the Soviet republic. Intellectuals, specialists, men of affairs – the entire petty-bourgeois class and pseudo-specialists at present climbing up the Soviet ladder, rung by rung, under the guise of "specialists", stepped aside, watching and waiting but meanwhile giving freedom to the advanced working masses to develop their creative abilities.

At present, however, it is just the other way. The worker feels, sees, and realises at every step that specialists and (what is worse) untrained illiterate pseudo-specialists, and unpractical men, throw out the worker and fill up all the high administrative posts of our industrial and economic institutions. And the party, instead of putting the brakes on this tendency from the elements which are altogether foreign to the working class and communism, encourages it. The party seeks salvation from the industrial chaos, not in the workers but in these very elements. Not in the workers, not in their union organisations does the party repose its trust, but in these elements. The working masses feel it and instead of unanimity and unity in the party, there appears a break.

The masses are not blind. Whatever words the most popular leaders might use in order to conceal their deviation from a clear-cut class policy, whatever the compromises made with the peasants and

world capitalism, and whatever the trust that the leaders place in the disciples of the capitalist system of production, the working masses feel where the digression begins.

The workers may cherish an ardent affection and love for such personalities as Lenin. They may be fascinated by the incomparable flowery eloquence of Trotsky and his organising abilities. They may revere a number of other leaders as leaders. But when the masses feel that they and their class are not trusted, it is quite natural that they say: "No, halt! We refuse to follow you blindly. Let us examine the situation. Your policy of picking out the middle ground between three socially opposed groups is a wise one indeed, but it smacks of the well-tried and familiar adaptation and opportunism. Today we may gain something with the help of your sober policy, but let us beware lest we find ourselves on a wrong road that, through zigzags and turns, will lead from the future to the débris of the past."

Distrust of the workers by the leaders is steadily growing. The more sober these leaders get, the more clever statesmen they become with their policy of sliding over the blade of a sharp knife between communism and compromise with the bourgeois past, the deeper becomes the abyss between the "ups" and the "downs", the less understanding there is, and the more painful and inevitable becomes the crisis within the party itself.

The third reason enhancing the crisis in the party is that, in fact, during these three years of the revolution, the economic situation of the working class, of those who work in factories and mills, has not only not been improved, but has become more unbearable. This nobody dares to deny. The suppressed and widely-spread dissatisfaction among workers (*workers*, mind you) has a real justification.

Only the peasants gained directly by the revolution. As far as the middle classes are concerned, they very cleverly adapted themselves to the new conditions, together with the representatives of the rich bourgeoisie, who had occupied all the responsible and directing positions in the Soviet institutions (particularly in the sphere of directing state economy, in the industrial organisations and the re-establishment of commercial relations with foreign nations). Only the basic class of the Soviet republic, which bore all the burdens of the dictatorship as a mass, ekes out a shamefully pitiful existence.

The workers' republic controlled by the communists, by the vanguard of the working class, which, to quote Lenin, "has absorbed all the revolutionary energy of the class", has not had time enough to ponder over and improve the conditions of all the workers (those not

in individual establishments which happened to gain the attention of the Council of the People's Commissars in one or another of the so-called "shock industries") in general and lift their conditions of life to a human standard of existence.

The Commissariat of Labour is the most stagnant institution of all the commissariats. In the whole of the Soviet policy, the question was never seriously raised on a national scale and discussed: what must and can be done in the face of the utter collapse of industry at home and a most unfavourable internal situation to improve the workers' conditions and preserve their health for productive labour in the future, and to better the lot of the workers in the shops.

Until recently, Soviet policy was devoid of any worked out plan for improving the lot of the workers and their conditions of life. All that was done in this field was done almost incidentally, or at random, by local authorities under the pressure of the masses themselves. During these three years of civil war, the proletariat heroically brought to the altar of the revolution their innumerable sacrifices. They waited patiently. But now that the pulse of life in the republic is again transferred to the economic front, the rank-and-file worker considers it unnecessary to "suffer and wait". Why? Is he not the creator of life on a communist basis? Let us ourselves take up this reconstruction, for we know better than the gentlemen from the centres where it hurts us most.

The rank-and-file worker is observant. He sees that so far the problems of hygiene, sanitation, improving conditions of labour in the shops – in other words, the betterment of the workers' lot – has occupied the last place in our policy. In our solution to the housing problem, we went no further than housing the workers' families in inconvenient bourgeois mansions. What is still worse, so far we have not even touched the practical problem of housing in regard to workers. To our shame, in the heart of the republic, in Moscow itself, working people are still living in filthy, overcrowded and unhygienic quarters, one visit to which makes one think that there has been no revolution at all. We all know that the housing problem cannot be solved in a few months, even years, and that due to our poverty, its solution is faced with serious difficulties. But the facts of ever-growing inequality between the privileged groups of the population in Soviet Russia and the rank-and-file workers, "the framework of the dictatorship", breed and nourish the dissatisfaction.

The rank-and-file worker sees how the Soviet official and the practical man lives and how he lives – he on whom rests the dictatorship of the proletariat. He cannot but see that during the revolution,

the life and health of the workers in the shops commanded the least attention; that where prior to the revolution there existed more or less bearable conditions, they are still maintained by the shop committees. And where such conditions did not exist, where dampness, foul air and gases poisoned and destroyed the workers' health, these conditions remain unchanged. "We could not attend to that; pray, there was the military front." And yet whenever it was necessary to make repairs in any of the houses occupied by the Soviet institutions, they were able to find both the materials and the labour. What would happen if we tried to shelter our specialists or practical men engaged in the sphere of commercial transactions with foreign capitalists in those huts in which the masses of workers still live and labour? They would raise such a howl that it would become necessary to mobilise the entire housing department in order to correct "the chaotic conditions" that interfere with the productivity of our specialists.

The service of the Workers' Opposition consists in that it included the problem of improving the workers' lot (together with all the other secondary workers' demands) into the general economic policy. The productivity of labour cannot be increased unless the life of the workers is organised on a new communist basis.

The less that is undertaken and planned (I do not speak of something that has been carried out) in this sphere, the deeper is the misunderstanding, the estrangement, and still greater is the mutual distrust between leaders and workers. There is no unity, no sense of their identity of needs, demands and aspirations. The leaders are one thing, and we are something altogether different. Maybe it is true that the leaders know better how to rule over the country, but they fail to understand our needs, our life in the shops, its requirements and immediate needs; they do not understand and do not know. From this reasoning follows the instinctive leaning towards the unions, and the consequent dropping out of the party. "It is true they are a part of us, but as soon as they get into the centres, they leave us altogether; they begin to live differently; if we suffer, what do they care? Our sorrows are not theirs any longer."

And the more our industrial establishments and unions are drained of their best elements by the party (which sends them either to the front or to the Soviet institutions), the weaker becomes the direct connection between the rank-and-file workers and the directing party centres. A chasm is growing. At present, this division manifests itself even in the ranks of the party itself. The workers, through their Workers' Opposition ask: Who are we? Are we really the prop of the class

dictatorship? Or are we just an obedient flock that serves as a support for those who, having severed all ties with the masses, carry out their own policy and build up industry without any regard to our opinions and creative abilities under the reliable cover of the party label?

Whatever the party leaders might do in order to drive away the Workers' Opposition, the latter will always remain that growing healthy class force which is destined to inject vitalising energy into the rehabilitation of economic life as well as into the communist party, which begins to fade and bend low to the ground.

There are thus three causes which bring about a crisis in our party: there is first of all the overall objective conditions under which communism in Russia is being carried out (the civil war, economic backwardness of the country, its utter industrial collapse as an aftermath of the long years of war); the second cause is the heterogeneous composition of our population (seven million workers, the peasantry, the middle classes, and, finally, the former bourgeoisie, men of affairs in all professions, who influence the policy of Soviet institutions and penetrate into the party); the third cause is the inactivity of the party in the field of immediate improvement of the workers' life coupled with the inability and weakness of the corresponding Soviet institutions to take up and solve these problems.

What then is it that the Workers' Opposition wants? What is its role?

Its role consists in raising before the party all the perturbing questions, and in giving form to all that heretofore was causing only a subdued agitation in the masses and led the non-partisan workers ever further from the party. It clearly and fearlessly shouted to the leaders: "Stop, look and think! Where do you lead us? Are we not going off the right road? It will be very bad for the party to find itself without the foundation of the dictatorship. The party will be on its own and so will the working class. In this lies the greatest danger to the revolution."

The task of the party at its present crisis is fearlessly to face the mistakes and lend its ear to the healthy class call of the wide working masses. Through the creative powers of the rising class, in the form of industrial unions, we shall go forwards towards reconstruction and the development of the creative forces of the country; towards purification of the party itself from elements foreign to it; towards correction of the activity of the party by means of going back to democracy, freedom of opinion, and criticism inside the party.

In a basic yet brief outline, we have already explained what it is that causes the crisis in our party. Now we shall make clear what are the most important points of the controversy between the leaders of our party and the Workers' Opposition.

There are two such points: firstly, the part to be played by, and the problems confronting, the trade unions during the reconstruction period of the national economy, coupled with the organisation of production on a communist basis, and secondly, the question of self-activity of the masses. This question is linked with that of bureaucracy in the party and the Soviets.

Let us answer both questions in turn. The period of "making theses" in our party has already ended. Before us we find six different platforms, six party tendencies. Such a variety and such minute variations of shades in its tendencies our party has never seen before. Party thought has never been so rich in formulae on one and the same question. It is, therefore, obvious that the question is a basic one, and very important.

And such it is. The whole controversy boils down to one basic question: who shall build the communist economy, and how shall it be built? This is, moreover, the essence of our programme: this is its heart. This question is just as important as the question of seizure of political power by the proletariat. Only the Bubnov group of so-called political centralism is so nearsighted as to underestimate its importance and to say: "The question concerning trade unions at the present moment has no importance whatsoever, and presents no theoretical difficulties."

It is, however, quite natural that the question seriously agitates the party. The question is really: "In what direction shall we turn the wheel of history; shall we turn it back or move it forward?" It is also natural that there is not a single communist in the party who would remain non-committal during the discussion of this question. As a result, we have six different groups.

If we begin, however, carefully to analyse all the theses of these most minutely divergent groups, we find that on the basic question – who shall build the communist economy and organise production on a new basis – there are only two points of view. One is that which is expressed and formulated in the statement of principles of the Workers' Opposition. The other is the viewpoint that unites all the rest of the groups differing only in shades, but identical in substance.

What does the statement of the Workers' Opposition stand for, and how does the latter understand the part that is to be played by the trade unions, or, to be more exact, the industrial unions, at the

present moment?

"We believe that the question of reconstruction and development of the productive forces of our country can be solved only if the entire system of control over the people's economy is changed" (from Shlyapnikov's report, 30 December). Take notice, comrades: "only if the entire system of control is changed." What does this mean? "The basis of the controversy," the report continues, "revolves around the question: by what means during this period of transformation can our communist party carry out its economic policy – shall it be by means of the workers organised into their class union, or – over their heads – by bureaucratic means, through canonised functionaries of the state?" The basis of the controversy is, therefore, this: shall we achieve communism through the workers or over their heads, by the hands of Soviet officials? And let us, comrades, ponder whether it is possible to attain and build a communist economy by the hands and creative abilities of the scions of the other class, who are imbued with their routine of the past? If we begin to think as marxists, as men of science, we shall answer categorically and explicitly: "No!"

The root of the controversy and the cause of the crisis lies in the supposition that "practical men", technicians, specialists, and managers of capitalist production can suddenly release themselves from the bonds of their traditional conceptions of ways and means of handling labour (which have been deeply ingrained into their very flesh through the years of their service to capital) and acquire the ability to create new forms of production, of labour organisation, and of incentives to work.

To suppose that this is possible is to forget the incontestable truth that a system of production cannot be changed by a few individual geniuses, but through the requirements of a class.

Just imagine for a moment that during the transitory period from the feudal system (founded on slave labour) to the system of capitalist production (with its alleged free hired labour in the industries), the bourgeois class, lacking at the time the necessary experience in the organisation of capitalist production, had invited all the clever, shrewd experienced managers of the feudal estates who had been accustomed to deal with servile chattel slaves, and entrusted to them the task of organising production on a new capitalist basis. What would happen? Would these specialists in their own sphere, depending on the whip to increase productivity of labour, succeed in handling a "free", though hungry, proletarian, who had released himself from the curse of involuntary labour and had become a soldier or a day labourer? Would not these experts wholly destroy the newly-born and developing capitalist

production? Individual overseers of the chattel slaves, individual former landlords and their managers, were able to adapt themselves to the new form of production; but it was not from their ranks that the real creators and builders of the bourgeois capitalist economy were recruited.

Class instinct whispered to the first owners of the capitalist establishments that it was better to go slowly and use common sense in place of experience in the search for new ways and means to establish relations between capital and labour, than to borrow the antiquated useless methods of exploitation of labour from the old, outlawed system. Class instinct quite correctly told the first capitalists during the first period of capitalist development that in place of the whip of the overseer they must apply another incentive – rivalry, personal ambition of workers facing unemployment and misery. And the capitalists, having grasped this new incentive to labour, were wise enough to use it in order to promote the development of the bourgeois capitalist forms of production by increasing the productivity of "free" hired labour to a high degree of intensity.

Five centuries ago, the bourgeoisie acted also in a cautious way, carefully listening to the dictates of their class instincts. They relied more on their common sense than on the experience of the skilled specialists in the sphere of organising production on the old feudal estates. The bourgeoisie was perfectly right, as history has shown us.

We possess a great weapon that can help us to find the shortest road to the victory of the working class, diminish suffering along the way, and bring about the new system of production – communism – more quickly. This weapon is the materialistic conception of history. However, instead of using it, widening our experience and correcting our researches to conformity with history, we are ready to throw this weapon aside and follow the encumbered, circuitous road of blind experiments.

Whatever our economic distress happens to be, we are not justified in feeling such an extreme degree of despair. It is only the capitalist governments, standing with their backs to the wall, that need feel despair. After exhausting all the creative impulses of capitalist production, they find no solution to their problems.

As far as toiling Russia is concerned, there is no room for despair. Since the October revolution, unprecedented opportunities for economic creation have now opened new, unheard-of forms of production, with an immense increase in the productivity of labour.

It is only necessary not to borrow from the past, but, on the contrary, to give complete freedom to the creative powers of the future. This is what the Workers' Opposition is doing. Who can be the builder

and creator of the communist economy? That class – and not the individual geniuses of the past – which is organically bound with newly-developing, painfully-born forms of production of a more productive and perfect system of economy. Which organ can formulate and solve the problems in the sphere of organising the new economy and its production – the pure class industrial unions, or the heterogeneous Soviet economic establishments? The Workers' Opposition considers that it can be done only by the former, that is, by the workers' collective, and not by the functional, bureaucratic, socially heterogeneous collective with a strong admixture of the old capitalist elements, whose mind is clogged with the refuse of capitalistic routine.

"The workers' unions must be drawn from the present position of passive assistance to the economic institutions into active participation in the management of the entire economic structure" (from "Theses of the Workers' Opposition"). To seek, find and create new and more perfect forms of economy, to find new incentives to the productivity of labour – all this can be done only by the workers' collectives that are closely bound with the new forms of production. Only these collectives, from their everyday experience, are capable of drawing certain conclusions. At first glance, these conclusions appear to be only of practical importance, and yet exceedingly valuable theoretical conclusions may be drawn from them concerning the handling of new labour power in a workers' state where misery, poverty, unemployment and competition on the labour market cease to be incentives to work.

To find a stimulus, an incentive to work – this is the greatest task of the working class standing on the threshold of communism. None other, however, than the working class itself in the form of its class collectives, is able to solve this great problem.

The solution to this problem, as proposed by the industrial unions, consists in giving complete freedom to the workers as regards experimenting, class training, adjusting and discovering new forms of production, as well as expressing and developing their creative abilities – that is, to that class which can alone be the creator of communism.

This is how the Workers' Opposition sees the solution to this difficult problem, from which follows the most essential point of their theses: "Organisation of control over the social economy is a prerogative of the All-Russian Congress of Producers, who are united in the trade and industrial unions which elect the central body directing the whole economic life of the republic" ("Theses of the Workers' Opposition"). This demand would ensure freedom for the manifestation of creative class abilities, not restricted and crippled by the bureaucratic

machine which is saturated with the spirit of routine of the bourgeois capitalist system of production and control. The Workers' Opposition relies on the creative powers of its own class: the workers. The rest of our programme follows from this premise.

But right at this point there begin the differences between the Workers' Opposition and the line that is followed by the party leaders. Distrust towards the working class (not in the sphere of politics, but in the sphere of economic creative abilities) is the whole essence of the theses signed by our party leaders. They do not believe that by the rough hands of workers, untrained technically, can be created those foundations of the economic forms which, in the course of time, shall develop into a harmonious system of communist production.

To all of them – Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Bukharin – it seems that production is "such a delicate thing" that it is impossible to get along without the assistance of "directors". First of all we shall "bring up" the workers, "teach them", and only when they have grown up shall we remove from them all the teachers of the Supreme Council of the National Economy and let the industrial unions take control over production. It is, after all, significant that all the theses written by the party leaders coincide in one essential feature: for the present, we shall not give control over production to the trade unions; for the present "we shall wait". It is doubtless true that Trotsky, Lenin, Zinoviev and Bukharin differ in their reasons as to why the workers should not be entrusted with running the industries just at present. But they unanimously agree that just at the present time, the management of production must be carried on over the workers' heads by means of a bureaucratic system inherited from the past.

On this point all the leaders of our party are in complete accord. "The centre of gravity in the work of the trade unions at the present moment," assert the Ten in their Theses, "must be shifted into the economic industrial sphere. The trade unions as class organisations of workers, built up in conformity with their industrial functions, must take on the *major work* in organisation of production." "Major work" is a too indefinite term. It permits of various interpretations. And yet it would seem that the platform of the "Ten" gives more leeway for the trade unions in running the industries than Trotsky's centralism. Further, the theses of the "Ten" go on to explain what they mean by "major work" of the unions. "The most energetic participation in the centres which regulate production and control, register and distribute labour power, organise exchange between cities and villages, fight against sabotage, and carry out decrees on different compulsory labour obliga-

tions, etc." This is all. Nothing new. And nothing more than what the trade unions have already been doing. This cannot save our production nor help in the solution of the basic question – raising and developing the productive forces of our country.

In order to make clear the fact that the programme of the "Ten" does not give to the trade unions any of the directing functions, but assigns to them only an auxiliary role in the management of production, the authors say: "In a developed stage (not at present, but at a 'developed stage'), the trade unions in their process of social transformation must become organs of a social authority. They must work as such, in subordination to other organisations, and carry out the new principles of organisation of economic life." By this they mean to say that the trade unions must work in subordination to the Supreme Council of the National Economy and its branches.

What is the difference, then, with that and "joining by growth" which was proposed by Trotsky? The difference is only one of method. The theses of the "Ten" strongly emphasise the educational nature of the trade unions. In their formulation of problems for the trade unions (mainly in the sphere of organisation, industry and education), our party leaders as clever politicians suddenly convert themselves into "teachers".

This peculiar controversy is revolving not around the system of management in industry, but mainly around the system of bringing up the masses. In fact, when one begins to turn over the pages of the stenographic minutes and speeches made by our prominent leaders, one is astonished by the unexpected manifestation of their pedagogic proclivities. Every author of the theses proposes the most perfect system of bringing up the masses. But all these systems of "education" lack provisions for freedom of experiment, for training and for the expression of creative abilities by those who are to be taught. In this respect also all our pedagogues are behind the times.

The trouble is that Lenin, Trotsky, Bukharin and others see the functions of the trade unions not as control over production or as the taking over of the industries, but merely as a school for bringing up the masses. During the discussion it seemed to some of our comrades that Trotsky stood for a gradual "absorption of the unions by the state" – not all of a sudden, but gradually and that he wanted to reserve for them the right of ultimate control over production, as it is expressed in our programme. This point, it seemed at first, put Trotsky on a common ground with the Opposition at a time when the group represented by Lenin and Zinoviev, being opposed to the "absorption of the state", saw the object of union activity and their problem as "training

for communism". "Trade unions," thunder Trotsky and Zinoviev, "are necessary for the rough work" (p. 22 of the report, 30 December). Trotsky himself, it would seem, understands the task somewhat differently. In his opinion, the most important work of the unions consists in organising production. In this he is perfectly right. He is also right when he says, "Inasmuch as unions are schools of communism, they are such schools not in carrying on general propaganda (for such activity would mean they were playing the part of clubs), not in mobilising their members for military work or collecting the produce tax, but for the purpose of all-round education of their members on the basis of their participation in production" (Trotsky's report, 30 December). All this is true, but there is one grave omission: *the unions are not only schools for communism, but they are its creators as well.*

Creativeness of the class is being lost sight of. Trotsky replaces it by the initiative of "the real organisers of production", by communists inside the unions (from Trotsky's report, 30 December). What communists? According to Trotsky, by those communists appointed by the party to responsible administrative positions in the unions (for reasons that quite often have nothing in common with considerations of industrial and economic problems of the unions). Trotsky is quite frank. He does not believe that the workers are ready to create communism, and through pain, suffering and blunder still seek to create new forms of production. He has expressed this frankly and openly. He has already carried out his system of "club education" of the masses, of training them for the role of "master" in the Central Administrative Body of Railways, adopting all those methods of educating the masses which were practised by our traditional journeymen upon their apprentices. It is true that a beating on the head by a boot-stretcher does not make an apprentice a successful shopkeeper after he becomes a journeyman. And yet as long as the boss-teacher's stick hangs over his head, he works and produces.

This, in Trotsky's opinion, is the whole essence of shifting the central point "from politics to industrial problems". To raise, even temporarily, productivity by every and all means is the whole crux of the task. The whole course of training in the trade unions must be, in Trotsky's opinion, also directed towards this end.

Comrades Lenin and Zinoviev, however, disagree with him. They are "educators" of "a modern trend of thought". It has been stated many a time that the trade unions are schools for communism. What does that mean – "schools for communism"?

If we take this definition seriously, it will mean that in schools

for communism it is necessary first of all to teach and bring up, but not to command (this allusion to Trotsky's views meets with applause). Further on, Zinoviev adds: the trade unions are performing a great task, both for the proletarian and the communist cause. This is the basic part to be played by the trade unions. At present, however, we forget this, and think that we may handle the problem of trade unions too recklessly, too roughly, too severely.

It is necessary to remember that these organisations have their own particular tasks – these are not tasks of commanding, supervising or dictating, but tasks in which all may be reduced to one: drawing the dictating, but tasks in which all may be reduced to one: drawing of the working masses into the channel of the organised proletarian movement. Thus, teacher Trotsky went too far in his system of bringing up the masses. But what does Comrade Zinoviev himself propose? To give, within the unions, the first lessons in communism: "to teach them (the masses) the basic facts about the proletarian movement." How? "Through practical experience, through practical creation of the new forms of production?" Just what the Opposition wants? Not at all. Zinoviev-Lenin's group favours a system of bringing up through reading, giving moral precepts and good, well-chosen examples. We have 500,000 communists (among whom, we regret to say, there are many "strangers" – stragglers from the other world) to seven million workers.

According to Comrade Lenin, the party has drawn to itself "the proletarian vanguard". The best communists, in co-operation with specialists from the Soviet economic institutions, are searching hard in their laboratories for the new forms of communist production. These communists, working at present under the care of "good teachers" in the Supreme Council of the National Economy or other centres, these Peters and Johns are the best pupils, it is true. But the working masses in the trade unions must look to these exemplary Peters and Johns and learn something from them without touching with their owns hands the rudder of control, for it is "too early as yet". They have "not yet learned enough".

In Lenin's opinion the trade unions – that is, the working-class organisations – are not the creators of the communist forms of people's economy, for they serve only as a connecting link between the vanguard and the masses: "the trade unions in their everyday work persuade masses, masses of that class . . . " etc.

That is not Trotsky's "club system", not a mediaeval system of education. This is the Froebel-Pestalozzi German system founded on studying examples. Trade unions must do nothing vital in the industries.

But they must persuade the masses. They must keep the masses in touch with the vanguard, with the party which (remember this!) does not organise production as a collective, but only creates Soviet economic institutions of a heterogeneous composition, whereto it appoints communists.

Which system is better? This is the question. Trotsky's system, whatever it may be in other respects, is clearer and therefore more real. On reading books and studying examples taken from goodhearted Peters and Johns, one cannot advance education too far. This must be remembered, and remembered well.

Bukharin's group occupies the middle ground. Or rather, it attempts to co-ordinate both systems of upbringing. We must notice, however, that it too fails to recognise the principle of independent creativeness of the unions in industry. In the opinion of Bukharin's group, the trade unions play a double role (so it is proclaimed in their thesis). On the one hand it (obviously "the role") takes on itself the function of a "school for communism". And, on the other hand, it takes on the functions of an intermediary between the party and the masses (this is from Lenin's group). It takes on, in other words, the role of a machine: injecting the wide proletarian masses into the active life (notice, comrades – "into the active life" – but not into the creation of a new form of economy or into a search for new forms of production). Besides that they (obviously the unions), in ever increasing degree, must become the component part both of the economic machine and of the state authority. This is Trotsky's "joining together".

The controversy again revolves not around the trade union problems but around the methods of educating the masses by means of the unions. Trotsky stands, or rather stood, for a system which, with the help of that introduced among the railway workers, might hammer into the organised workers' heads the wisdom of communist reconstruction. By means of "appointees", "shake-ups", and all kinds of miraculous measures promulgated in conformity with "the shock system", it would re-make the unions so that they might join the Soviet economic institutions by growth, and become obedient tools in realising economic plans worked out by the Supreme Council of the National Economy.

Zinoviev and Lenin are not in a hurry to join up the trade unions to the Soviet economic machine. The unions, they say, shall remain unions. As regards production, it will be run and managed by men whom *we* choose. When the trade unions have brought up obedient and industrious Peters and Johns, we will "inject" them into the Soviet economic institutions. Thus the unions will gradually disappear, dissolve.

The creation of new forms of national economy they entrust to the Soviet bureaucratic institutions. As to the unions, they leave them the role of "schools". Education, education and more education. Such is the Lenin-Zinoviev slogan. Bukharin, however, wanted "to bank" on radicalism in the system of union education, and, of course, he fully merited the rebuke from Lenin together with the nickname of "Simidicomist". Bukharin and his group, while emphasising the educational part to be played by the unions in the present political situation, stand for the most complete workers' democracy inside the unions, for wide elective powers to the unions – not only for the elective principle generally applied, but for non-conditional election of delegates nominated by the unions. What a democracy! This smacked of the very Opposition itself, if it were not for one difference. *The Workers' Opposition sees in the unions the managers and creators of the communist economy, whereas Bukharin, together with Lenin and Trotsky, leave to them only the role of "schools for communism" and no more.* Why should Bukharin not play with the elective principle, when everybody knows that it will do no good or bad to the system of running industry? For, as a matter of fact, the control of industry will still remain outside the unions, beyond their reach, in the hands of the Soviet institutions. Bukharin reminds us of those teachers who carry on education in conformity with the old system by means of "books". "You must learn that far and no further", while encouraging "self-activity" of the pupils . . . in organising dances, entertainments etc.

In this way, the two systems quite comfortably live together and square up with one another. But what the outcome of all this will be, and what duties will the pupils of these teachers of eclectics be able to perform – that is a different question. If Comrade Lunacharsky were to disapprove at all the educational meetings of "eclectic heresy" like this, the position of the People's Commissariat on Education would be precarious indeed.

However, there is no need to underestimate the educational methods of our leading comrades in regard to the trade unions. They all, Trotsky included, realise that in the matter of education, "self-activity" of the masses is not the least factor. Therefore, they are in search of such a plan where trade unions, without any harm to the prevailing bureaucratic system of running the industry, may develop their initiative and their economic creative powers.

The least harmful sphere where the masses could manifest their self-activity as well as their "participation in active life" (according to Bukharin) is the sphere of betterment of the workers' lot. The Workers'

Opposition pays a great deal of attention to this question, and yet it knows that the basic sphere of class creation is the creation of new industrial economic forms, of which the betterment of the workers' lot is only a part.

In Trotsky and Zinoviev's opinion, all production must be initiated and adjusted by the Soviet institutions, while the trade unions are advised to perform a rather restricted, though useful, work of improving the lot of the workers. Comrade Zinoviev, for instance, sees in distribution of clothing the "economic role" of the unions, and explains: "There is no more important problem than that of economy; to repair one bath-house in Petrograd at present is ten times more important than delivering five good lectures."

What is this? A naïve, mistaken view? Or a conscious substitution of organising creative tasks in the sphere of production and development of creative abilities, by restricted tasks of home economics, household duties, etc.? In somewhat different language, the same thought is expressed by Trotsky. He very generously proposes to the trade unions to develop the greatest initiative possible in the economic field.

But where shall this initiative express itself? In "putting glass" in the shop window or filling up a pool in front of the factory (from Trotsky's speech at the Miners' Congress)? Comrade Trotsky, take pity on us! For this is merely the sphere of house-running. If you intend to reduce the creativeness of the unions to such a degree, then the unions will become not schools for communism, but places where they train people to become janitors. It is true that comrade Trotsky attempts to widen the scope of the "self-activity of the masses" by letting them participate not in an independent improvement of the workers' lot, on the job (only the "insane" Workers' Opposition goes that far), but by taking lessons from the Supreme Council of the National Economy on this subject.

Whenever a question concerning workers is to be decided, as for instance about distribution of food or labour power, it is necessary that the trade unions should know exactly, not in general outline as mere citizens, but know thoroughly the whole current work that is being done by the Supreme Council of the National Economy (speech of 30 December). The teachers from the Supreme Council of the National Economy not only force the trade unions "to carry out" plans, but they also "explain to their pupils their decrees". This is already a step forward in comparison with the system that functions at present on the railways.

To every thinking worker, it is clear, however, that putting in

glass, useful as it may be, has nothing in common with running industry; productive forces and their development do not find expression in this work. The really important question still is: how to develop the productive forces. How to build such a state of economy by squaring the new life with production, and how to eliminate unproductive labour as much as possible. A party may bring up a red soldier, a political worker or an executive worker to carry out the prospects already laid out. But it cannot develop a creator of communist economy, for only a union offers an opportunity for developing the creative abilities along new lines.

Moreover, this is not the task of the party. The party task is to create the conditions – that is, give freedom to the working masses united by common economic industrial aims – so that workers can become worker-creators, find new impulses for work, work out a new system to utilise labour power, and discover how to distribute workers in order to reconstruct society, and thus to create a new economic order of things founded on a communist basis. *Only workers can generate in their minds new methods of organising labour as well as running industry.*

This is a simple marxist truth, and yet at present the leaders of our party do not share it with us. Why? Because they place more reliance on the bureaucratic technicians, descendants of the past, than on the healthy elemental class-creativeness of the working masses. In every other sphere we may hesitate as to who is to be in control – whether the workers' collective or the bureaucratic specialists, be it in the matter of education, development of science, organisation of the army, care of public health. But there is one place, that of the economy, where the question as to who shall have control is very simple and clear for everyone who has not forgotten history.

It is well known to every marxist that the reconstruction of industry and the development of the creative forces of a country depend on two factors: on the development of technique and on the efficient organisation of labour by means of increasing productivity and finding new incentives to work. This has been true during every period of transformation from a lower stage of economic development to a higher one throughout the history of human existence.

In a workers' republic the development of the productive forces by means of technique plays a secondary role in comparison with the second factor, that of the efficient organisation of labour, and the creation of a new system of economy. Even if Soviet Russia succeeds in carrying out completely its project of general electrification, without introducing any essential change in the system of control and organisation of the people's economy and production, it would only catch up

with the advanced capitalist countries in the matter of development.

Yet, in the efficient utilisation of labour power and building up a new system of production, Russian labour finds itself in exceptionally favourable circumstances. These give her the opportunity to leave far behind all bourgeois capitalist countries in the question of developing the productive forces. Unemployment as an incentive to labour in socialist Russia has been done away with. New possibilities are open for a working class that has been freed from the yoke of capital, to have its own creative say in finding new incentives to labour and the creation of new forms of production which will have had no precedent in all of human history.

Who can, however, develop the necessary creativeness and keenness in this sphere? Is it the bureaucratic elements, the heads of the Soviet institutions or the industrial unions, whose members in their experience of regrouping workers in the shop come across creative, useful, practical methods that can be applied in the process of reorganising the entire system of the people's economy? The Workers' Opposition asserts that administration of the people's economy is the trade unions' job and, therefore, that the Opposition is more marxist in thought than the theoretically trained leaders.

The Workers' Opposition is not so ignorant as wholly to underestimate the great value of technical progress or the usefulness of technically trained men. It does not, therefore, think that after electing its own body of control over industry it may safely dismiss the Supreme Council of the National Economy, the central industrial committees, economic centres, etc. Not at all. The Workers' Opposition thinks that it must assert its own control over these technically valuable administrative centres, give them theoretical tasks, and use their services as the capitalists did when they hired the technicians in order to carry out their own schemes. Specialists can do valuable work in developing the industries; they can make the workers' manual labour easier; they are necessary, indispensable, just as science is indispensable to every rising and developing class. But the bourgeois specialists, even when communist labels are pasted on them, are powerless physically and too weak mentally to develop the productive forces in a non-capitalist state; to find new methods of labour organisation and to develop new incentives for intensification of labour. In this, the last word belongs to the working class – to the industrial unions.

When the rising bourgeois class, having reached the threshold leading from mediaeval to modern times, entered into the economic battle with the decaying class of feudal lords, it did not possess any

technical advantages over the latter. The trader – the first capitalist – was compelled to buy goods from that craftsman or journeyman who by means of hand files, knife, and primitive spindles was producing goods both for his "master" (the landlord) and for the outside trader, with whom he entered into a "free" trade agreement. Feudal economy having reached a culminating point in its organisation, ceased to give any surplus, and there began a decrease in the growth of productive forces. Humanity stood face to face with the alternatives of either economic decay or of finding new incentives for labour, of creating, consequently, a new economic system which would increase productivity, widen the scope of production, and open new possibilities for the development of productive forces.

Who could have found and evolved the new methods in the sphere of industrial reorganisation? None but those class representatives who had not been bound by the routine of the past, who understood that the spindle and cutter in the hands of a chattel slave produce incomparably less than in the hands of supposedly free hired workers, behind whose back stands the incentive of economic necessity.

Thus the rising class, having found where the basic incentive to labour lay, built on it a complex system great in its own way: the system of capitalist production. The technicians only came to the aid of capitalists much later. The basis was the new system of labour organisation, and the new relations that were established between capital and labour.

The same is true at present. No specialist or technician imbued with the routine of the capitalist system of production can ever introduce any new creative motive and vitalising innovation into the fields of labour organisation, in creating and adjusting a communist economy. Here the function belongs to the workers' collectives. The great service of the Workers' Opposition is that it brought up this question of supreme importance frankly and openly before the party.

Comrade Lenin considers that we can put through a communist plan in the economic field by means of the party. Is it so? First of all, let us consider how the party functions. According to comrade Lenin, "it attracts to itself the vanguard of workers"; then it scatters them over various Soviet institutions (only a part of the vanguard gets back into the trade unions, where the communist members, however, are deprived of an opportunity of directing and building up the people's economy). These well-trained, faithful, and perhaps very talented communist-economists disintegrate and decay in the general economic institutions. In such an atmosphere, the influence of these comrades is

weakened, marred, or entirely lost.

Quite a different thing with the trade unions. There, the class atmosphere is thicker, the composition more homogeneous, the tasks that the collective is faced with more closely bound with the immediate life and labour needs of the producers themselves, of the members of factory and shop committees, of the factory management and the unions' centres. Creativeness and the search for new forms of production, for new incentives to labour, in order to increase productivity, may be generated only in the bosom of this natural class collective. Only the vanguard of the class can create revolution, but only the whole class can develop through its everyday experience the practical work of the basic class collectives.

Whoever does not believe in the basic spirit of a class collective – and this collective is most fully represented by the trade unions – must put a cross over the communist reconstruction of society. Neither Krestinsky or Preobrazhensky, Lenin or Trotsky can infallibly push to the forefront by means of their party machine those workers able to find and point out new approaches to the new system of production. Such workers can be pushed to the front only by life-experience itself, from the ranks of those who actually produce and organise production at the same time.

This consideration, which should be very simple and clear to every practical man, is lost sight of by our party leaders; *it is impossible to decree communism.* It can be treated only in the process of practical research, through mistakes, perhaps, but only by the creative powers of the working class itself.

The cardinal point of the controversy that is taking place between the party leaders and the Workers' Opposition is this: to whom will our party entrust the building of the communist economy – to the Supreme Council of the National Economy with all its bureaucratic branches? Or to the industrial unions? Comrade Trotsky wants "to join" the trade unions to the Supreme Council of the National Economy, so that, with the assistance of the latter, it might be possible to swallow up the former. Comrades Lenin and Zinoviev, on the other hand, want to "bring up" the masses to such a level of communist understanding that they could be painlessly absorbed into the same Soviet institutions. Bukharin and the rest of the factions express essentially the same view. Variations exist only in the way they put it; the essence is the same. Only the Workers' Opposition expresses something entirely different, defends the proletarian class viewpoint in the very process of creation and realisation of its tasks.

The administrative economic body in the workers' republic during the present transitory period must be a body directly elected by the producers themselves. All the other administrative economic Soviet institutions should serve only as executive centres of the economic policy of the all-important economic body of the workers' republic. All else is goosestepping, that shows distrust towards the creative abilities of the workers, distrust which is not compatible with the professed ideals of our party, whose very strength depends on the perennial creative spirit of the proletariat.

There will be nothing surprising if at the approaching party congress, the sponsors of the different economic reforms, with the single exception of the Workers' Opposition, will come to a common understanding through mutual compromises and concessions, since there is no essential controversy among them.

The Workers' Opposition alone will not and must not compromise. This does not, however, mean that it "is aiming at a split". Not at all. Its task is entirely different. Even in the event of defeat at the congress, it must remain in the party, and step by step stubbornly defend its point of view, save the party, clarify its class lines.

Once more in brief: what is it that the Workers' Opposition wants?

1. To form a body from the workers – producers themselves – for administering the people's economy.
2. For this purpose (i.e. for the transformation of the unions from the role of passive assistance to economic bodies, to that of active participation and manifestation of their creative initiative) the Workers' Opposition proposes a series of preliminary measures aimed at an orderly and gradual realisation of this aim.
3. Transferring of the administrative functions of industry into the hands of the union does not take place until the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the trade unions has found the said unions to be able and sufficiently prepared for the task.
4. All appointments to the administrative economic positions shall be made with consent of the union. All candidates nominated by the union to be non-removable. All responsible officials appointed by the unions are responsible to it and may be recalled by it.
5. In order to carry out all these proposals, it is necessary to strengthen the rank and file nucleus in the unions, and to prepare factory and shop committees for running the industries.
6. By means of concentrating in one body the entire administration of the public economy (without the existing dualism of the Supreme

Council of the National Economy and the All-Russian Executive Committee of the trade unions) there must be created a singleness of will which will make it easy to carry out the plan and put into life the communist system of production. Is this syndicalism? Is not this, on the contrary, the same as what is stated in our party programme, and are not the elements of principles signed by the rest of the comrades deviating from it?

Is it to be bureaucracy or self-activity of the masses? This is the second point of the controversy between the leaders of our party and the Workers' Opposition. The question of bureaucracy was raised and only superficially discussed at the Eighth Soviet Congress. Herein, just as in the question on the part to be played by the trade unions and their problems, the discussion was shifted to a wrong channel. The controversy on this question is more fundamental than it might seem.

The essence is this: what system of administration in a workers' republic during the period of creation of the economic basis for communism secures more freedom for the class creative powers? Is it a bureaucratic state system or a system of wide practical self-activity of the working masses? The question relates to the system of administration and the controversy arises between two diametrically opposed principles: bureaucracy or self-activity. And yet they try to squeeze it into the scope of the problem that concerns itself only with methods of "animating the Soviet institutions".

Here we observe the same substitution of the subjects discussed as the one that occurred in the debates on the trade unions. It is necessary to state definitely and clearly that half-measures, changes in relations between central bodies and local economic organisations, and other such petty non-essential innovations (such as responsible officials or the injection of party members into the Soviet institutions, where these communists are subjected to all the bad influences of the prevailing bureaucratic system, and distintegrate among the elements of the former bourgeois class) will not bring "democratisation" or life into the Soviet institutions.

This is not the point however. Every child in Soviet Russia knows that the vital problem is to draw the wide toiling masses of workers, peasants and others into the reconstruction of economy in the proletarian state, and to change the conditions of life accordingly. The task is clear: it is to arouse initiative and self-activity in the masses.

But what is being done to encourage and develop that initiative? Nothing at all. Quite the contrary. At every meeting we call upon the working men and women to "create a new life, build up and assist the Soviet authorities". But no sooner do the masses or individual groups of workers take our admonition seriously and attempt to apply it in real life than some bureaucratic institution, feeling ignored, hastily cuts short the efforts of the over-zealous initiators.

Every comrade can easily recall scores of instances when workers themselves attempted to organise dining-rooms, day nurseries for children, transportation of wood, etc. Each time a lively, immediate interest in the undertaking died from the red tape, interminable negotiations with the various institutions that brought no results, or resulted in refusals, new requisitions etc. Wherever there was an opportunity under the impetus of the masses themselves – of the masses using their own efforts – to equip a dining-room, to store a supply of wood, or to organise a nursery, refusal always followed refusal from the central institutions. Explanations were forthcoming that there was no equipment for the dining-room, lack of horses for transporting the wood, and absence of an adequate building for the nursery. How much bitterness is generated among working men and women when they see and know that if they had been given the right, and an opportunity to act, they could themselves have seen the project through. How painful it is to receive a refusal of necessary materials when such material had already been found and procured by the workers themselves. Their initiative is therefore slackening and the desire to act is dying out. "If that is the case," people say, "let officials themselves take care of us." As a result, there is generated a most harmful division: *we* are the toiling people, *they* are the Soviet officials, on whom everything depends. This is the whole trouble.

Meanwhile, what are our party leaders doing? Do they attempt to find the cause of the evil? Do they openly admit that their very system which was carried out into life through the Soviets, paralyses and deadens the masses, though it was meant to encourage their initiative? No, our party leaders do nothing of the kind. Just the opposite. Instead of finding means to encourage the mass initiative which could fit perfectly into our flexible Soviet institutions, our party leaders all of a sudden appear in the role of defenders and knights of bureaucracy. How many comrades follow Trotsky's example and repeat that "we suffer, not because we adopt the bad sides of bureaucracy, but because we have failed so far to learn the good ones." ("On one common plan", by Trotsky.)

Bureaucracy is a direct negation of mass self-activity. Whoever

therefore accepts the principle of involving the masses in active participation as a basis for the new system of the workers' republic, cannot look for good or bad sides in bureaucracy. He must openly and resolutely reject this useless system. Bureaucracy is not a product of our misery as comrade Zinoviev tries to convince us. Neither is it a reflection of "blind subordination" to superiors, generated by militarism, as others assert. This phenomenon has deeper roots. It is a by-product of the same cause that explains our policy of double-dealing in relation to the trade unions, namely, the growing influence in the Soviet institutions of elements hostile in spirit not only to communism, but also to the elementary aspirations of the working masses. Bureaucracy is a scourge that pervades the very marrow of our party as well as of the Soviet institutions. This fact is emphasised not only by the Workers' Opposition. It is also recognised by many thoughtful comrades not belonging to this group.

Restrictions on initiative are imposed, not only in regard to the activity of the non-party masses (this would only be a logical and reasonable condition, in the atmosphere of the civil war). The initiative of party members themselves is restricted. Every independent attempt, every new thought that passes through the censorship of our centre, is considered as "heresy", as a violation of party discipline, as an attempt to infringe on the prerogatives of the centre, which must "foresee" everything and "decree" everything and anything. If anything is not decreed one must wait, for the time will come when the centre at its leisure will decree. Only then, and within sharply restricted limits, will one be allowed to express one's "initiative". What would happen if some of the members of the Russian Communist Party – those, for instance, who are fond of birds – decided to form a society for the preservation of birds? The idea itself seems useful. It does not in any way undermine any "state project". But it only seems this way. All of a sudden there would appear some bureaucratic institution which would claim the right to manage this particular undertaking. That particular institution would immediately "incorporate" the society into the Soviet machine, deadening, thereby, the direct initiative. And instead of direct initiative, there would appear a heap of paper decrees and regulations which would give enough work to hundreds of other officials and add to the work of mails and transport.

The harm in bureaucracy does not only lie in the red tape, as some comrades would want us to believe – they narrow the whole controversy to the "animation of Soviet institutions". The harm lies in the solution of all problems, not by means of an open exchange of opinions or by the immediate efforts of all concerned, but by means of formal

decisions handed down from the central institutions. These decisions are arrived at either by one person or by an extremely limited collective, wherein the interested people are quite often entirely absent. *Some third person decides your fate: this is the whole essence of bureaucracy.*

In the face of the growing suffering in the working class, brought about by the confusion of the present transitory period, bureaucracy finds itself particularly weak and impotent. Miracles of enthusiasm in stimulating the productive forces and alleviating working conditions can only be performed by the active initiative of the interested workers themselves, provided it is not restricted and repressed at every step by a hierarchy of "permissions" and "decrees".

Marxists, and Bolsheviks in particular, have been strong and powerful in that they never stressed the policy of immediate success of the movement. (This line, by the way, has always been followed by the opportunists-compromisers.) Marxists have always attempted to put the workers in such conditions as would give them the opportunity to temper their revolutionary will and to develop their creative abilities. The workers' initiative is indispensable for us, and yet we do not give it a chance to develop.

Fear of criticism and of freedom of thought, by combining together with bureaucracy, often produce ridiculous results. There can be no self-activity without freedom of thought and opinion, for self-activity manifests itself not only in initiative, action and work, but in independent thought as well. We give no freedom to class activity, we are afraid of criticism, we have ceased to rely on the masses: hence we have bureaucracy with us. That is why the Workers' Opposition considers that bureaucracy is our enemy, our scourge, and the greatest danger to the future existence of the communist party itself.

In order to do away with the bureaucracy that is finding its shelter in the Soviet institutions, we must first get rid of all bureaucracy in the party itself. That is where we face the immediate struggle. As soon as the party – not in theory but in practice – recognises the self-activity of the masses as the basis of our state, the Soviet institutions will again automatically become living institutions, destined to carry out the communist project. They will cease to be the institutions of red tape and the laboratories for still-born decrees into which they have very rapidly degenerated.

What shall we do then in order to destroy bureaucracy in the party and replace it by workers' democracy? First of all it is necessary to understand that our leaders are wrong when they say: "Just now we agree to loosen the reins somewhat, for there is no immediate danger

on the military front, but as soon as we again feel the danger we shall return to the military system in the party." We must remember that heroism saved Petrograd, more than once defended Lugansk, other centres, and whole regions. Was it the Red Army alone that put up the defence? No. There was, besides, the heroic self-activity and initiative of the masses themselves. Every comrade will recall that during the moments of supreme danger, the party always appealed to this self-activity, for it saw in it the sheet-anchor of salvation. It is true that at times of threatening danger, party and class discipline must be stricter. There must be more self-sacrifice, exactitude in performing duties, etc. But between these manifestations of class spirit and the "blind subordination" which is being advocated lately in the party, there is a great difference.

In the name of party regeneration and the elimination of bureaucracy from the Soviet institutions, the Workers' Opposition, together with a group of responsible workers in Moscow, demand complete realisation of all democratic principles, not only for the present period of respite but also for times of internal and external tension. This is the first and basic condition for the party's regeneration, for its return to the principles of its programme, from which it is more and more deviating in practice under the pressure of elements that are foreign to it.

The second condition, the vigorous fulfilment of which is insisted upon by the Workers' Opposition, is the expulsion from the party of all non-proletarian elements. The stronger the Soviet authority becomes, the greater is the number of middle class, and sometimes even openly hostile elements, joining the party. The elimination of these elements must be complete and thorough. Those in charge of it must take into account the fact that the most revolutionary elements of non-proletarian origin had joined the party during the first period of the October revolution. The party must become a workers' party. Only then will it be able vigorously to repel all the influences that are now being brought to bear on it by petty-bourgeois elements, peasants, or by the faithful servants of capital – the specialists.

The Workers' Opposition proposes to register all members who are non-workers and who joined the party since 1919, and to reserve for them the right to appeal within three months against the decisions arrived at, in order that they might join the party again.

At the same time, it is necessary to establish a "working status" for all those non-working-class elements who will try to get back into the party, by providing that every applicant to membership of the party must have worked a certain period of time at manual labour, under

general working conditions, before he becomes eligible for enrolment into the party.

The third decisive step towards democratisation of the party is the elimination of all non-working class elements from administrative positions. In other words, the central, provincial, and county committees of the party must be so composed that workers closely acquainted with the conditions of the working masses should have the preponderant majority therein.

Closely related to this demand stands the further demand of converting all our party centres, beginning from the Central Executive Committee and including the provincial county committees, from institutions taking care of routine, everyday work, into institutions of control over Soviet policy.

We have already remarked that the crisis in our party is a direct outcome of three distinct cross-currents, corresponding to the three different social groups: the working class, the peasantry and middle class, and elements of the former bourgeoisie – that is, specialists, technicians and men of affairs.

Problems of state-wide importance compel both the local and central Soviet institutions, including even the Council of People's Commissars and the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, to lend an ear to, and conform with, these three distinct tendencies, representing the groups that compose the population of Soviet Russia. As a result, the class line of our general policy is blurred, and the necessary stability is lost. Considerations of state interests begin to outweigh the interests of the workers.

To help the central committee and party committees stand firmly on the side of our class policy, to help them call all our Soviet institutions to order each time that a decision in Soviet policy becomes necessary (as, for instance, in the question of the trade unions) it is necessary to disassociate the prerogatives of such responsible officials who, at one and the same time, have responsible posts both in the Soviet institutions and in the communist party centres. We must remember that Soviet Russia has not so far been a socially homogeneous unit. On the contrary, it has represented a heterogeneous social conglomeration. The state authority is compelled to reconcile these at times mutually hostile interests by choosing the middle ground.

The central committee of our party must become the supreme directing centre of our class policy, the organ of class thought and control over the practical policy of the Soviets, and the spiritual personification of our basic programme. To ensure this, it is necessary, particularly in the

central committee, to restrict multiple office-holding by those who, whilst being members of the central committee, also occupy high posts in the Soviet government. For this purpose, the Workers' Opposition proposes the formation of party centres, which would really serve as organs of ideal control over the Soviet institutions, and would direct their actions along clear-cut class lines. To increase party activity, it would be necessary to implement everywhere the following measure: at least one third of party members in these centres should be permanently forbidden to act as party members and Soviet officials at the same time.

The fourth basic demand of the Workers' Opposition is that the party must reverse its policy in relation to the elective principle.

Appointments are permissible only as exceptions. Lately they have begun to prevail as a rule. Appointments are very characteristic of bureaucracy, and yet at present they are a general, legalised and well-recognised daily occurrence. The procedure of appointments produces a very unhealthy atmosphere in the party. It disrupts the relationship of equality amongst the members by rewarding friends and punishing enemies, and by other no less harmful practices in party and Soviet life. Appointments lessen the sense of duty and responsibility to the masses in the ranks of those appointed, for they are not responsible to the masses. This makes the division between the leaders and the rank and file members still sharper.

Every appointee, as a matter of fact, is beyond any control. The leaders are not able closely to watch his activity while the masses cannot call him to account and dismiss him if necessary. As a rule every appointee is surrounded by an atmosphere of officialdom, servility and blind subordination, which infects all subordinates and discredits the party. The practice of appointments completely rejects the principle of collective work. It breeds irresponsibility. Appointments by the leaders must be done away with and replaced by the elective principle at every level of the party. Candidates shall be eligible to occupy responsible administrative positions only when they have been elected by conferences or congresses.

Finally, in order to eliminate bureaucracy and make the party more healthy, it is necessary to revert to the state of affairs where all the cardinal questions of party activity and Soviet policy were submitted to the consideration of the rank and file, and only after that were supervised by the leaders. This was the state of things when the party was forced to carry on its work in secret – even as late as the time of the signing of the Brest-Litovsk treaty.

At present, the state of things is altogether different. In spite

of the widely circulated promises made at the All-Russian Party Conference held in September (1920) a no less important question than that of concessions was quite arbitrarily decided for the masses. Only due to the sharp controversy that arose within the party centres themselves was the question of the trade unions brought out into the open, to be thrashed out in debate.

Wide publicity, freedom of opinion and discussion, the right to criticise within the party and among the members of the trade unions – such are the decisive steps that can put an end to the prevailing system of bureaucracy. Freedom of criticism, right of different factions freely to present their views at party meetings, freedom of discussion – are no longer the demands of the Workers' Opposition alone. Under the growing pressure from the masses, a whole series of measures that were demanded by the rank and file long before the party conference are now recognised and officially promulgated. One need only read the proposals of the Moscow Committee in regard to party structure to be proud of the great influence that is being exerted on the party centres. If it were not for the Workers' Opposition, the Moscow Committee would never have taken such a sharp "turn to the left". However, we must not overestimate this "leftism", for it is only a declaration of principles to the Congress. It may happen, as it has many a time with decisions of our party leaders during these years, that this radical declaration will soon be forgotten. As a rule, these decisions are accepted by our party centres only just as the mass impetus is felt. As soon as life again swings into normal channels, the decisions are forgotten.

Did not this happen to the decision of the Eighth Congress which resolved to free the party of all elements who joined it for selfish motives, and to use discretion in accepting non-working-class elements? What has become of the decision taken by the party conference in 1920, when it was decided to replace the practice of appointments by recommendations? Inequality in the party still persists, in spite of repeated resolutions passed on this subject. Comrades who dare to disagree with decrees from above are still being persecuted. There are many such instances. If all these various party decisions are not enforced, then it is necessary to eliminate the basic cause that interferes with their enforcement. We must remove from the party those who are afraid of publicity, strict accountability before the rank and file, and freedom of criticism.

Non-working-class members of the party, and those workers who fell under their influence, are afraid of all this. It is not enough to clean the party of all non-proletarian elements by registration or to

increase the control in time of enrolment, etc. It is also necessary to create opportunities for the workers to join the party. It is necessary to simplify the admission of workers to the party, to create a more friendly atmosphere in the party itself, so that workers might feel themselves at home. In responsible party officials, they should not see superiors but more experienced comrades, ready to share with them their knowledge, experience and skill, and to consider seriously workers' needs and interests. How many comrades, particularly young workers, are driven away from the party just because we manifest our impatience with them by our assumed superiority and strictness, instead of teaching them, bringing them up in the spirit of communism?

Besides the spirit of bureaucracy, an atmosphere of officialdom finds a fertile ground in our party. If there is any comradeship in our party it exists only among the rank and file members.

The task of the party congress is to take into account this unpleasant reality. It must ponder over the question: why is the Workers' Opposition insisting on introducing equality, on eliminating all privileges in the party, and on placing under a stricter responsibility to the masses those administrative officials who are elected by them.

In its struggle for establishing democracy in the party, and for the elimination of all bureaucracy, the Workers' Opposition advances three cardinal demands:

1. Return to the principle of election all along the line with the elimination of all bureaucracy, by making all responsible officials answerable to the masses.
2. Introduce wide publicity within the party, both concerning general questions and where individuals are involved. Pay more attention to the voice of the rank and file (wide discussion of all questions by the rank and file and their summarising by the leaders; admission of any member to the meetings of party centres, except when the problems discussed require particular secrecy). Establish freedom of opinion and expression (giving the right not only to criticise freely during discussions, but to use funds for publication of literature proposed by different party factions).
3. Make the party more a workers' party. Limit the number of those who fill offices, both in the party and the Soviet institutions at the same time.

This last demand is particularly important. Our party must not only build communism, but prepare and educate the masses for a prolonged period of struggle against world capitalism, which may take on unexpected new forms. It would be childish to imagine that, having

repelled the invasion of the White Guards and of imperialism on the military fronts, we will be free from the danger of a new attack from world capital, which is striving to seize Soviet Russia by roundabout ways, to penetrate into our life, and to use the Soviet Republic for its own ends. This is the great danger that we must stand guard against. And herein lies the problem for our party: how to meet the enemy well-prepared, how to rally all the proletarian forces around the clear-cut class issues (the other groups of the population will always gravitate to capitalism). It is the duty of our leaders to prepare for this new page of our revolutionary history.

It will only be possible to find correct solutions to these questions when we succeed in uniting the party all along the line, not only together with the Soviet institutions, but with the trade unions as well. The filling up of offices in both party and trade unions not only tends to deviate party policy from clear-cut class lines but also renders the party susceptible to the influences of world capitalism during this coming epoch, influences exerted through concessions and trade agreements. To make the central committee one that the workers feel is their own is to create a central committee wherein representatives of the lower layers connected with the masses would not merely play the role of "parading generals", or a merchant's wedding party. The committee should be closely bound with the wide non-party working masses in the trade unions. It would thereby be enabled to formulate the slogans of the time, to express the workers' needs, their aspirations, and to direct the policy of the party along class lines.

Such are the demands of the Workers' Opposition. Such is its historic task. And whatever derisive remarks the leaders of our party may employ, the Workers' Opposition is today the only vital active force with which the party is compelled to contend, and to which it will have to pay attention.

Is the Opposition necessary? Is it necessary, on behalf of the liberation of the workers throughout the world from the yoke of capital, to welcome its formation? Or is it an undesirable movement, detrimental to the fighting energy of the party, and destructive to its ranks?

Every comrade who is not prejudiced against the Opposition and who wants to approach the question with an open mind and to analyse it, even if not in accordance with what the recognised authorities tell him, will see from these brief outlines that the Opposition is useful and necessary. It is useful primarily because it has awakened slumbering thought. During these years of revolution, we have been so preoccupied with our pressing affairs that we have ceased to appraise

our actions from the standpoint of principle and theory. We have been forgetting that the proletarian can commit grave mistakes and not only during the period of struggle for political power. It can turn to the morass of opportunism. Even during the epoch of the dictatorship of the proletariat such mistakes are possible, particularly when on all sides we are surrounded by the stormy waves of imperialism and when the Soviet Republic is compelled to act in a capitalist environment. At such times, our leaders must be not only wise, "statesmanlike" politicians. They must also be able to lead the party and the whole working class along the line of class creativeness. They must prepare it for a prolonged struggle against the new forms of penetration of the Soviet Republic by the bourgeois influences of world capitalism. "Be ready, be clear – but along class lines"; such must be the slogan of our party, and now more than ever before.

The Workers' Opposition has put these questions on the order of the day, rendering thereby an historic service. The thought begins to move. Members begin to analyse what has already been done. Wherever there is criticism, analysis, wherever thought moves and works, there is life, progress, advancement forward towards the future. There is nothing more frightful and harmful than sterility of thought and routine. We have been retiring into routine, and might inadvertently have gone off the direct class road leading to communism, if it were not for the Workers' Opposition injecting itself into the situation at a time when our enemies were about to burst into joyful laughter. At present this is already impossible. The congress, and therefore the party, will be compelled to contend with the point of view expressed by the Workers' Opposition. They will either compromise with it or make essential concessions under its influence and pressure.

The second service of the Workers' Opposition is that it has brought up for discussion the question as to who, after all, shall be called upon to create the new forms of economy. Shall it be the technicians and men of affairs, who by their psychology are bound up with the past, together with Soviet officials and some communists scattered among them, or shall it be working-class collectives, represented by the unions?

The Workers' Opposition has said what has long ago been printed in **The Communist Manifesto** by Marx and Engels: the building of communism can and must be the work of the toiling masses themselves. The building of communism belongs to the workers.

Finally, the Workers' Opposition has raised its voice against bureaucracy. It has dared to say that bureaucracy binds the wings of

self-activity and the creativeness of the working class; that it deadens thought, hinders initiative and experimenting in the sphere of finding new approaches to production; in a word that it hinders the development of new forms for production and life.

Instead of a system of bureaucracy, the Workers' Opposition proposes a system of self-activity for the masses. In this respect, the party leaders even now are making concessions and "recognising" their deviations as being harmful to communism and detrimental to working class interests (the rejection of centralism). The Tenth Congress, we understand, will make another series of concessions to the Workers' Opposition. Thus, in spite of the fact that the Workers' Opposition appeared as a mere group inside the party only a few months ago, it has already fulfilled its mission. It has compelled the leading party centres to listen to the workers' sound advice. At present, whatever might be the wrath towards the Workers' Opposition, it has the historical future to support it.

Just because we believe in the vital forces of our party, we know that after some hesitation, resistance and devious political moves, our party will ultimately again follow that path which has been blazed by the elemental forces of the proletariat. Organised as a class, there will be no split. If some groups leave the party, they will not be the ones that make up the Workers' Opposition. Only those will fall out who attempt to evolve into principles the temporary deviations from the spirit of the communist programme that were forced upon the party by the prolonged civil war, and hold to them as if they were the essence of our political line of action.

All those in the party who have been accustomed to reflect the class viewpoint of the ever-growing proletariat will absorb and digest everything that is wholesome, practical and sound in the Workers' Opposition. Not in vain will the rank-and-file worker speak with assurance and reconcilation: "Ilyich (Lenin) will ponder, he will think it over, he will listen to us. And then he will decide to turn the party rudder toward the Opposition. Ilyich will be with us yet".

The sooner the party leaders take into account the Opposition's work and follow the road indicated by the rank-and-file members, the quicker shall we overcome the crisis in the party. And the sooner shall we step over the line beyond which humanity, having freed itself from the objective economic laws and taking advantage of all the richness and knowledge of common working-class experience, will consciously begin to create the human history of the communist epoch.

6

Morality and the New Society

Kollontai's failure to form her observations on particular social processes into a general analysis of events, and her emphasis on reform of the trade unions as the only course that could save the revolution, had a bearing on the nature and effectiveness of her activities in the cause of women's liberation. In the first half of the 1920s she wrote several of her most interesting articles and essays on questions of women, the family and sexual relations, but she was extending and filling in the insights of earlier years rather than developing her ideas in the light of the rapid changes in Soviet reality, and she proved unable to defend the ideals she stood for against the attacks to which they were increasingly subjected. Many of her writings, it is true, were published in the period of War Communism, and if they demonstrated a lack of awareness of the difficulties and obstacles facing socialist construction in the backward Soviet stronghold, this was a fault they shared with nearly all Bolshevik writing, which remained confident of the victory of world revolution. But because Kollontai was hostile to NEP, she continued to repeat the formulations of the period when short-cuts and forced marches to communism had seemed really possible, and this prevented her from effectively fighting for the integration of women's demands in the new government policies, or for a greater understanding on the part of the party of women's oppression. She failed to show the importance of the issues of which she wrote to the political debates on capital accumulation and industrialisation which were engrossing the party, and she thereby missed any opportunity there might have been of elevating the questions of women and the family to the central position they deserved. Her opponents could ascribe her defence of women's rights to a dislike of government economic policy, or a gesture that was well-intentioned but not worthy of much attention when there was so much else to be done; and in fact, by taking advantage of the cravings of many party members for order and quiet, they managed fairly easily to destroy the influence she had wielded in the party as spokeswoman on women's affairs.

One Western commentator, expressing a common viewpoint, has observed that "'her ideas on free love, originally restricted to an abstract denial that the moral standards brought into being within a capitalist society should apply to sexual behaviour in its successor, have been further developed into a positive advocacy of standards regarded as libertine not only from the conservative standpoint, but also from that of the first generation of revolutionaries".[34] Kollontai's ideas, in other words, became more and more preposterous and the party quite sensibly put its foot down. In actual fact things were quite otherwise, for her ideas changed very little. It was the attitudes of men and women both inside and outside the party that were changing and giving rise to objections against what had previously been accepted without question.

Although Lenin had apparently opposed Kollontai's suggestion that a note on the withering away of the family be incorporated in the party's new programme passed in 1919,[35] Kollontai had, through the women's commissions and then the women's departments, been able to express her views in resolutions, articles and pamphlets. In 1919 two essays on sexual morality she had written before the war were published, in 1921 her "Theses on Communist Morality in the Sphere of Marital Relations" (pp. 225-31) were included in the journal **Kommunistka;** and in the same year she gave a series of subsequently published lectures at the Sverdlov university in Moscow, on women in the economy and in the family. And all this without hostile attacks.

However, a number of her articles appeared in **Molodaya gvardiya** ("Young Guard") in late 1922 and early 1923; one of these was the "Letter to Working Youth" (pp. 276-92). Although they dealt with the same problems of love and morality and expressed thoughts similar to those expressed before, their reception was unprecedently dramatic and far from warm. One was printed on special white paper, and its title page was decorated with question marks signifying the controversial nature of the contents. A note from the editors assured readers that the article did not necessarily reflect the ideas of the editorial board. In the same issue was a piece by Professor Zalkind, a famous psychologist of highly reactionary views, praising abstinence and the sublimation of sexual energy; it neverthless was printed on the ordinary cream-coloured paper without attendant question marks, the editors apparently finding nothing there to quarrel with. The critics, taking their cue from the question marks, hurried to pour their scorn on Kollontai's

ideas, and the appearance soon afterwards of a collection of her fictional work gave them a chance to create those myths about her irresponsible advocation of mindless sex which have survived with little alteration to this day. Writers still find it possible to refer without fear of contradiction to Kollontai's "far-out views on sex",[36] and most standard works on aspects of Soviet welfare or social thought make passing references to Kollontai and her "glass of water" theory of sex. The wild inaccuracy of all this is a measure of the talent of the original myth-makers. Sociologists such as Vol'fson and Svetlov substantiated the "critique" in their scholarly works of those years, reconstructing their own picture of the struggle that had taken place round the question of morality. Branding Kollontai as an ultra-leftist enabled them to imply that she agreed with the enforced community of women and mindless theories of sexual satisfaction. Although this reconstruction rests on the most shaky foundations, it has managed to retain its credibility. Fanina Halle in her influential book **Women in Soviet Russia**, published in the 1930s, gives the accepted version of the morality debate of the mid-twenties and then has Lenin intervening through a conversation with Clara Zetkin – a conversation which, according to Zetkin, took place in 1920, before the debate ever began. Iring Fetscher writes in a similar vein.[37]

More aware of the true nature of Kollontai's views, many modern feminist writers, taking the rest of the evidence at its face value, have had to conclude that the Bolshevik leaders were a philistine bunch and that the party completely underestimated the importance of the sexual revolution and was, in fact, inherently hostile to it. In the years immediately after 1917, however, the predominant mood of the party was far from hostile. Although the question of sexual morality did not occupy a central position, articles in the press and books published testify to open and searching attitudes; and in the field of psychology and medicine, research and debate were breaking new ground. As for the famous and fateful conversation with Clara Zetkin, it was set down four years after it was supposed to have taken place, and the thoughts attributed to Lenin relate suspiciously to the discussions of 1924, in which he took no part, rather than those of 1920.

Nevertheless even if there were no initial blanket hostility, the confidence and predominance immediately exhibited by the right wing in 1923, when there was something of a national debate on these issues, was striking. While not until the thirties was it pos-

sible to revise marxist teaching on the family or to deny the necessity of entirely abolishing domestic labour, the battle over communist morality (on which the founders of scientific socialism had said very little) was fought and lost in the early twenties. It seems to have been in this area that the right wing made some of its earliest ideological gains. Although Trotsky wrote on **Problems of Everyday Life** and Preobrazhensky contributed a book **On Morality and Class Norms,** Kollontai was really the only leading party member to tackle the really fundamental questions of women and sexual morality from a left position, and she was unable to compete with the volume of printed matter put out by Yaroslavskii, Zalkind, Semashko and other right-wing opponents. She was isolated. She does not seem to have made much effort to defend herself or to counter-attack, but presumably her residence in Norway made this difficult, and the prejudices of editorial boards may have made it impossible.

The ideas Kollontai was putting forward seem today mild and reasonable; the furore they created at the time is indicative of the intellectual and cultural climate of the mid-twenties. The article "Questions of morality, sex, everyday life and comrade Kollontai", published by Paulina Vinogradskaya in one of the main journals of the period, is a good example of the type of criticism that was being levelled. Vinogradskaya was a young woman who had worked with Kollontai in the central women's department. By administering large doses of virulent abuse ("Comrade Kollontai was always wont to swim in a sea of hackneyed phrases and banal phrases diluted merely with a sickly sweet sentimentality and adorned with rhetorical curl-papers")[88] she attempted to expose the petty bourgeois essence of Kollontai's thought, thereby undermining the influence she still exercised over the women's movement. Vinogradskaya herself is convinced that marxism and sex are somehow mutually exclusive, and that in a time of social turmoil, "multi-faceted love" is not on the agenda; the idea that sexual love can be "for its own sake" and is not connected with the birth of children should be vigorously denounced.

Thus the fundamental principles of Soviet morality as we have come to know them – the marginality of the sexual question, the hostility of orthodox marxism to psychological and sexual issues and the emphasis on the need for disciplined, responsible family sex – were well expressed in this early article. And Kollontai's little essays were to continue to serve as the butt against which the moralists sharpened their weapons. "I am very much afraid", wrote Zalkind

in 1926, "that with the cult of 'the winged Eros' we will build aeroplanes very badly."[39]

The stories in the collection **Lyubov' pchel trudovykh** ("Love of the Worker Bees"), which was published in 1923, were later to be dismissed by Kollontai as unimportant because they lacked literary merit. As a young girl she had dreamed of becoming a writer and had sent one of her attempts at prose composition to the Russian writer Korolenko, who had replied that her idea was good but executed in a rather dry and crude manner. The same might be said of these stories; the characters may not be developed very convincingly, but the ideas are good. It was this power to put across political ideas rather than lack of style to which the critics objected, and it was the caustic comments of the critics rather than a consciousness of her lack of talent which led Kollontai to make slighting remarks about her own literary ventures.

One of the stories, "Sisters" (pp. 216-24), had first appeared in the March/April issue of **Kommunistka** and had been dealt with by Vinogradskaya in her article. Her trivial criticism that Kollontai had made her heroine a member of the "semi-intelligentsia" (which was actually not the case) and had made the prostitute a woman of some education were designed to give some substance to the charge of Kollontai's petty-bourgeois leanings, and so was the amazing assertion that her stories "reeked of pornography and the gutter". Kollontai is castigated for having picked, of all the questions facing working women, that of prostitution, and for having failed to show the heroine being helped out of her predicament by society and in particular by the women's departments. Vinogradskaya also echoes one of Engels's less scientific statements, that since working women were independent wage-earners they were as free as men in their choice of partners; she denies the specific oppression of women. She heaps abuse on the article Kollontai had contributed to **Molodaya gvardiya** in 1923, a critical appraisal of Anna Akhmatova in which she argues that although Akhmatova is not a proletarian poetess, her sensitivity to the painful process of woman's emerging independent personality gives her writing a meaning for working women. In addition Vinogradskaya finds the portrayal of male attitudes in "Sisters" unwarranted; the slogan of the story, she declares, is "Down with men".

"Sisters" in fact touched on a whole range of problems – unemployment, maternity and the dependence of women upon men, showing how in the conditions of NEP these problems intensified the sexual oppression of women. There was a growth in female unemployment and prostitution (which the statistics did not deny); even by 1925 only three per cent of children were catered for outside the home, many women's departments were closing, and those remaining were in a precarious financial position. The picture presented in "Sisters" would therefore seem plausible.

The other long story in the collection, "The Three Generations", touched more closely on the question of the new morality and was consequently the centre of even more controversy. Kollontai relates the biographies of three generations of women. The first leaves her husband for the man she loves, but then leaves him too when she finds him with another woman. For her, individual and exclusive love is the ideal and she therefore cannot understand her daughter of the second generation, who suppresses her feelings for a man because he does not share her political convictions; love is still individual and exclusive, but it is now subordinate to other considerations. The woman of the third generation, Zhenya, is a party worker in the revolutionary period who neither has the opportunity nor feels the need to fall romantically in love; her mother cannot understand how she can sleep with men she does not profess to love in the old sense of the word. Zhenya is presented as energetic and intelligent, dedicated to her work and fundamentally responsible in her relationships. Kollontai's sympathies are obvious, though she does not try to push her own blueprint of the new morality but rather to show how ideals of moral behaviour change with the times and to plead for woman's right to an independent life. But there were many who were unwilling to practise tolerance, and once again it was found more convenient to distort Kollontai's ideas and then attack the distortions.

Throughout her political life Kollontai was to return repeatedly to the problem of morality. From the beginning her interest in the problem had not been incidental but was linked with the philosophy of class struggle to which she adhered. In her essay on class struggle of 1905 she had emphasised the power of the masses and their capacity for spontaneous action, while in "The Problem

of Morality" and in a second article, which appeared in the same journal, **Obrazovaniye** ("Education"), the following year, she had expressed this power and capacity of the proletariat in terms of their moral ideal – collectivism.

It was in the period immediately after the publication of these articles that Kollontai began to recognise the specificity of women's oppression and its implications for political organisation. Inevitably, in her attempts to understand the woman question she came to apply her analysis of morality to the particular sphere of marriage and the family. In extending her ideas she had to cope not only with the perpendicular divisions of class but also with the horizontal divisions of sex. It followed from her early writings that the class norms of the bourgeoisie concerning sexual relations were to some extent observed by all classes, including the proletariat. She did not seek to romanticise relations between the sexes in the working-class milieu: "A marriage, even when contracted on the basis of mutual affection, rapidly turns into an unbearable yoke from which both sides often seek oblivion in vodka."[40] But she did not attempt to discuss in a systematic or detailed fashion the influence of ideology on proletarian life, and simply asserted that capitalism had an ugly effect on the masses; but since the proletarians had no property considerations, it was they rather than the bourgeois feminists who would create the new morality.

It was only in the period of her self-imposed exile that Kollontai began to turn her attention to the human instincts and emotions which are served and shaped by institutions such as the family and prostitution. She read Havelock Ellis, and no doubt took the opportunity to acquaint herself with the debate in progress in Western Europe on matters of love and marriage. Two of her essays written during this period and published in the socialist press (they were republished in Soviet Russia after the revolution) show Kollontai seeking to incorporate this new interest into her framework of ideas: "Love and the New Morality", and "Sexual Relations and the Class Struggle". The new ideas were not alien to her way of thinking and were obviously in line with her own personal experience as a woman. Consequently she did not hesitate to recognise the question of sexual mores as important to her politics, and suffered no qualms that such interests might contradict the rules of orthodox socialist analysis. Far from apologising for their subject matter, her essays argued that socialist debate should be extended to include questions which so far had only been taken up by the

representatives of bourgeois culture. In fact "Love and the New Morality" was a review of **The Sexual Crisis** by a German woman, Grete Meisel-Hess, who was a representative, albeit a critical one, of that culture.

Kollontai's review talks of "potential for loving", and it is a major concern of the article to emphasise the power of emotion. This was arguably the most significant new element in her thinking, for it clinched the shift in her argument (if feelings are important, then the working class must fight to end their distortion); but not surprisingly it was the least successfully conveyed. "Eros", she wrote, "flies away in terror, fearing to soil his golden wings in a bed so bespattered with dirt." It is not difficult to lose patience with such sentences and with her adoption of Meisel-Hess's terminology – "game-love", "erotic friendship", etc.; it is probably this vocabulary that has created the suspicion that she was a romantic. But in the first place the problem of finding a suitable mode of expression should be appreciated. If feminists today are frequently faced with the problem of developing new words with which to describe the oppression they are trying to understand, how much more difficult must it have been for Kollontai, who did not even have the vocabulary of psychoanalysis to fall back upon. And in the second place her observations on the art of loving were not offered as a panacea for the ills of the age. While the twentieth-century assertion of sexuality has on the whole been an abstract one, Kollontai's ideas were, to an even greater extent than Wilhelm Reich's, an exception to the rule. She subjected the social relations of sexuality to trenchant criticism and stressed the need for social change. She retained a socialist perspective on the need for change in economic structures, but while most socialists felt that on the question of morality a rejection of bourgeois values would suffice, Kollontai believed that it was important to understand the rules of human relationships, and that the fight to change these rules was of benefit to the class struggle: it was, in fact, part of that struggle. "Sexual Relations and the Class Struggle" (pp. 237-49) clearly expresses her desire to fully understand the place of her new ideas in the marxist framework. She reiterated in clearer terms the need to see the issue of morality as a political issue. But she did not argue simply that the proletariat was responsible for working out its own morality, nor that the working class would develop spontaneously, through the conditions of its life, moral norms that would challenge the hegemony of bourgeois morality. The emer-

gence of the new morality she now saw as a complex social process: developments within the proletarian family were creating opposition to bourgeois norms, but among the middle class intelligentsia too there could be observed a trend towards freer marriage ties which threatened to undermine the social stability of the bourgeois social order.

Kollontai was pioneering a new line of enquiry. She was raising the question of the connections between the personal and the political, which has only now begun to be generally recognised by socialists as being of crucial importance. It was not altogether surprising that she did not go further into the problems she posed. The nature of ideology and culture had been little studied by marxists, and the sciences of psychoanalysis and sociology, essential for the furthering of her endeavour, were in their infancy. Her isolation within the German social democracy of this period and the lack of support and interest from the movement generally were also obstacles preventing Kollontai from extending her research. Women activists in the movement were few and far between, and they directed their energies towards maintaining an influence over the women's movement and warding off the threat from the right wing of social democracy; they concentrated on the issues of the franchise and maternity protection, leaving the psychological discussions to the revisionists. However, although Kollontai's writing was tentative and inadequate, it was opening up a much neglected dimension of socialist thought. Most importantly, Kollontai was pointing to the need to extend the arena of struggle to private life; she was seeking to show that the non-productive areas of existence, which had been left to the utopian socialists and others outside the fold, were accessible to scientific analysis. A comparison of her work with the standard texts of classical marxism – Engels's **Origins of the Family** and Bebel's **Woman and Socialism** – makes clear the greater sophistication of her critique of sexuality. Bebel recognised the existence of female sexuality but tended to view this as an abstract biological force, the interests of which could be met by clearing the obstacles of late marriage, prostitution and the double morality, etc. Engels was less sure about the biological equality of women's sexual impulses, and was of the opinion that in primitive societies women longed for chastity and therefore accepted patriarchy as a system that gave them the "right of surrendering to one man only"; but he too saw the barriers to "free love" as residing at the level of institutions, and could thus argue that where the

institutions of property and bourgeois law were not operative and where the women had economic independence – such as amongst the proletariat – the relations between the sexes were already free. Much of Kollontai's writing followed Engels in its championing of "individual sex love": in "Communism and the Family" she talks of "the union of two members of the workers' state united by love and mutual respect", and she often spoke of the monogamous relationship, cleansed of oppression, emerging in the future as a satisfying form of human relationship. But because she was more keenly aware of the pernicious and deeply engrained traits of egoism and individualism, because she knew the psychological dramas and jealousies that were part of love in the capitalist world, and because she understood that particularly for women the ideal of romantic love all too often involved a waste of precious time and energy on a search for perfection which could not exist in an oppressive society, Kollontai was less ready to commit herself than Engels, who had been prepared to state that individual sex love was by its nature exclusive and to declare that such love would in the future come to its full flowering. Kollontai laid more stress upon the dangers of exclusiveness in love and drew attention to the many shades of feeling and emotion of which human beings are capable.

Over the question of the monogamous family Kollontai took a questioning view that brings her closer to the modern feminists[41] than to Engels. Her comments on the division of labour are also very much in the modern vein. It could be argued that since classical marxism envisaged the end of the division of labour, the elimination of the first division of labour – "that between man and woman for child-breeding" – was assumed, but this point was never taken up by Engels nor were its implications for socialist practice explored. Engels, moreover, by linking the oppression of women to the introduction of private property and by maintaining in a muddled passage that "the division of labour is determined by entirely different causes than those which determine the status of women",[42] obscured the basis his work did contain for the development of an analysis of women's oppression.

In the lecture she gave at the Sverdlov university in 1921 Kollontai was much more explicit. She did not follow Engels and Bebel in their discussion of kinship groups, but concentrated on tracing the history of female labour. She argued that women's participation in production had in all historical epochs determined their social

status. Her more detailed discussion of the economic activities of primitive tribes enabled her to place the question of the sexual division of labour in focus:

> "Many consider that the enslavement of women, her rightlessness, was born with the establishment of private property. Such an attitude is mistaken. Private property only helped enslave woman in places where woman has in fact lost her significance in production under the influence of the growing division of labour. . . . The enslavement of women is connected with the moment of the division of labour according to sex, when productive labour falls to the lot of man and secondary labour to the lot of woman."[43]

Private property served to reinforce woman's inferiority by further increasing the division of labour, for with the creation of the individual family unit the woman became the preserver of the hearth. Kollontai's argument made it clear that the division of labour always meant potential if not actual discrimination along sexual lines, and it would have therefore seemed logical for her to emphasise how the introduction of the socialist mode of production would involve the elimination of all division of labour and thereby the trap of women's inferiority. Possibly because she assumed that the existence of the workers' state guaranteed that the struggle on this front would be waged, she did not discuss in her lectures the question of the sexual division of labour in the transition period. She did ask whether a situation might not arise where women would be returned once more to the home, but answered her question by declaring that the growth of the productive forces precluded such a possibility. The increasing mechanisation of production and the "depersonalisation" of the labour process were, she believed, eliminating any "objective" criteria for the division of labour. This economic determinism – a tendency to rely on the inevitable movement of the productive forces to solve everything – allowed Kollontai to give prominence to the idea of first bringing women into the area of social production to perform those tasks which previously they had fulfilled privately within the family. In fact, in Kollontai's writing there is little about the need to challenge sex roles. In **Around Workers' Europe** there was the one mention of the working-class family with a rota for housework. In "Communism and the Family" (pp. 250-60), published in 1919, she emphasises that in the future housework will be performed as a profession by both men and women, and in "Soon" (pp. 232-6),

written in 1922, she stated that in the future "young men and women will work together at the same professions". But these are isolated examples, and though they show the direction of her thoughts they also show her failure to express them in clear political terms.

This failure to develop a more aggressive politics on the question of male attitudes and role-sharing is the more surprising when one considers that she sought to trace in her writings the history of the domestic economy, and paid more attention to the problems it posed than any marxist before her. The language she uses in her discussions is not always that of our current debates, but this does not mean that she did not approach many of the same problems. From passages in "Communism and the Family" it is clear that Kollontai saw domestic labour as producing use values alone and as being, therefore, unproductive in the marxist sense; but the historical context in which she placed domestic labour enabled her to appreciate it as an important and essential aspect of the labour of the community and as an area of the economy that played a vital role in shaping social behaviour and attitudes.

There was a disjointedness in much of Kollontai's writing. While she had a comprehensive view of the problems of women's liberation she was often unable to express her theoretical position in political terms: she discusses sexual relations without mentioning birth control, and the "depersonalisation" of production without talking of men sharing the housework. This difficulty Kollontai had in articulating her ideas in a general political context made it appear as if she were "storming heaven", and made it particularly difficult for her to function and contribute constructively in a transitional period; it has given rise to frequent criticisms of her utopian views. Part of the problem is Kollontai's somewhat loose use of marxist terminology; the word "communist", for example, sometimes seems to refer to the distant future and sometimes, on the grounds of the nature of the party in power, to the present. This confusion raises questions about the tense of her remarks: is this the moral code to be applied at the present time, or is it an ideal goal? Her emphasis in "Theses on Communist Morality" on the importance of the legal aspects of liberation might be taken as additional proof of her inability to grasp the real situation and the possibilities it offered, and her anger at the legal right given wives to be posted to the same locality as their husbands as a senseless outburst of revolutionary asceticism. However, Kollontai's criticisms of the bourgeois character of legislation passed by the Soviet government

was understandable in terms of the wide feeling among party members that the revolution in this field had already been completed and the general ignorance of the fact that the aims of socialism were rather different; in 1926 she noted: "On the divorce question we are on a par with North America, whereas on the question of the illegitimate child we have not yet even progressed as far as the Norwegians."[44] She was striving to end the mystifications of the marriage relationship and to bring the question of relationships into the open, so that unconscious practice could be consciously understood.

Kollontai's treatment of the family was an extension of her attitude to domestic labour; she was constantly emphasising the economic factors that were behind the disintegration of the family. The pamphlet "Communism and the Family" was a piece of propaganda designed to show women that the processes of change were irreversible, that there was no going back to the old ways but that they should not be afraid of the new. It was necessary to break down the hostility and suspicion of the women and counter the rumours that the Bolsheviks intended to split up the family and take children from their mothers by force, and hence her assurance that the disintegration is happening of its own accord because of hidden economic forces, and that the Bolsheviks are doing their utmost to see that the process is not painful. Kollontai saw the revolution as allowing Soviet Russia to take a course of replacing the family rather than of piecing it together. For her the abolition of domestic labour was one of the central tasks of the transition to socialism and had an important economic significance. However, she did not accept the argument that a certain economic level had to be reached before the socialisation of family functions could be begun; in fact, she argued that given the poverty and backwardness the need to attack the domestic economy and struggle for the new family was particularly urgent.

The history of the Soviet Union and of Western societies shows us that Kollontai was right to insist that a socialist revolution, however meagre its social and economic resources, should from the very beginning integrate the problem of tackling domestic labour into its general economic programme. Kollontai's ideas were not utopian; it was her failure to develop her ideas into a concrete politics that gave the impression of utopianism. Her failure to formulate political demands appropriate in the transitional period led to the decline of the woman question and its further demotion

as a political priority. Kollontai was the only woman with sufficient experience, sufficient theoretical grasp of the issues involved and sufficient standing in the party to have developed such a programme, and her personal failure therefore had important consequences.

Although Kollontai's inability to function efficiently in the world of politics spoiled her effectiveness in fighting for action on the question of the family and morality the problem on this occasion was also external. For as her 1921 speech on prostitution (pp. 261-75) shows, she was, on occasion at least, capable of an integrated political approach. Whereas Bebel and Engels considered prostitution only in relation to their critique of bourgeois morality, stressing the social reasons for this phenomenon, which they saw as an inevitable element of capitalist society (an approach which Kollontai had followed in **The Social Basis**), in a workers' state something more than an exposure of the hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie is required. Kollontai tries to do something more. She shows how prostitution is connected not just with the woman's lack of sexual rights but with her economic dependence and her role in domestic labour. She attacks the argument that as the economy improves prostitution will of its own accord disappear, but backs up her arguments not only with a theoretical outline of the reasons why a consistent effort to eliminate prostitution must be begun at once, but with a series of practical suggestion as to what campaigns might be launched.

Then again in 1923, during a dispute with Nurina (a woman who was to rise to prominence in the thirties), Kollontai seems aware of the need for concrete proposals to cope with the difficulties of the transition period, and argues that since it may well be several decades before all women can be provided with jobs and their economic dependence eliminated, there must be a reorganisation of women's work. In an article published on 13 April in **Pravda**, she suggests that, since the position of women has deteriorated with the New Economic Policy, and since the government is no longer able to provide the finances to open creches and other facilities, new societies or other organisational forms ought to be developed to draw broad layers of workers into a movement to establish creches and children's homes and to deal with other aspects of the socialisation of everyday life.

But there was no support for her attempts to evolve a politics of women's liberation. Kollontai recognised the oppressive atmosphere

that was beginning to stifle party debate, and in this last article she made a plea: "If only comrades would cease to consider it necessary to jump heavily on anyone who says anything that is at all new, would cool their polemical ardour somewhat and stop building every 'molehill' into a 'deviation' or 'principled difference'." The seeds of sanity, however, fell on stony ground; on 3 May the paper published a resolution passed at the twelfth party congress the previous month, on work among women workers and peasants, which noted that the basis for feminist tendencies existed in the country and that these tendencies might attempt to win the working women away from the class struggle – by encouraging the formation of societies to improve the living conditions of working women. . . .

Sisters

She came, as so many others like her had come, for advice and moral support. I had met her briefly at delegate meetings. She had a fine, expressive face and eyes that were lively, though rather sad. On the day she visited me her face was paler than usual and her eyes wider with unhappiness.

"I've come to you because I have nowhere to go," she said. "I've been without a roof over my head for over three weeks now. I've no money, nothing to live on. Give me some work. Otherwise the only alternative for me is the street."

"But I thought you worked; I thought you had a job?"

"Yes, I did have work. But I left over three months ago . . . because of my baby . . . my baby fell ill. So I had to give up my work. Three times I managed to save my job, but in August I was made redundant. Two weeks after that my baby died. But I couldn't get my job back."

The woman sat with her head bowed, her eyes hidden behind their lids. Maybe tears were hidden, too.

"But why did you lose your job? Were they dissatisfied with your work?"

"It wasn't my work that was questioned; they thought I didn't need the job. My husband earns well, he's in a company. He's an important person, a business executive."

"How is it then that you are without money or a place to go? Have you separated?"

"Not formally. I simply walked out on him and I haven't been back, I'd do anything rather than go back to him. . . ."

She could no longer hold back the tears.

"Forgive me. This is the first time I've had a cry. I couldn't before, but when someone offers sympathy, it's difficult to stay dry-eyed. . . . I'll tell you my story and then you will understand my position."

The woman, it turned out, had met her husband in 1917, at the height of the revolution. They were both Bolsheviks and they both ardently longed to put an end to the exploiting class and begin building a great new world. Both of them firmly believed that their dreams would be realised. During the October days they were both at the barricades.

They came together in the heat of battle; there was no time to register their relationship. They continued to live their own separate lives, meeting only occasionally, when work permitted. But these meetings were full of light and joy; in those days they had been real comrades. The following year the woman became pregnant. The couple made their relationship official and began to live permanently together. The child did not keep her long from her work. She got a creche organised in her area. Her work was more important to her than her family. From time to time this used to make her husband frown. She used to let the housework go, but then he was never at home either. And when she was chosen as delegate to some conference he was proud of her. Now, she had joked, you won't make a scene when you get a cold supper, will you? "What does a meal matter?" he laughed. "It's love that mustn't be served up cold. You'll see all kinds of people at the conference. Keep your eyes open."

They laughed together, and it seemed that nothing could destroy the feelings they had for each other. They weren't just a husband and wife, they were comrades. They faced life hand in hand; they shared the same aims. They were engrossed in their work and not in themselves. And this suited their child; she grew up a healthy little girl. But then all this changed. How had it happened? The trouble seemed to have started when her husband had been appointed to the company.

At first they had both been pleased. It had been hard enough trying to keep her body and soul together. And there had been the worry that the creche might close. Her husband was very pleased that he could now arrange his family in the proper fashion. He suggested that she give up her job, but she hadn't wanted to lose the companionship, and the work itself was important to her. Working made one feel more independent, and she had been used to earning her own living since childhood. At first things went fine. They moved into another flat where there were two rooms and a kitchen. They employed a young girl to see to the house and look after the child. The woman devoted herself to political work in the area. Her husband was busy too. They only used the house for sleeping in. Then her husband had to go on a business trip for his group of enterprises. For three months he was off travelling for the Nepmen.* When he got back she immediately sensed that it was a

* Under the New Economic Policy (NEP), introduced in 1921, a degree of private enterprise, particularly in trade, was reintroduced into the economy; the "Nepmen" were the layer of businessmen who sprang from this policy.

stranger who had returned. He didn't listen to her. He hardly gave a glance in her direction. He began to dress smartly and even to use scent. He was never at home for as much as five minutes. Then he started to drink. He had never been one to drink, except on special occasions. In the years of the revolution there had been so much to do and no time to think of such things. But those times were past. The first time he had come home drunk it had frightened her rather than upset her. She was concerned at the harm it might do – it would certainly do him no good. The following morning she had tried to talk things over with him. But he drank his tea and was silent; he left the room without a word. She was hurt. But she thought it was because he felt guilty. However, three days had not gone by before he came home drunk a second time. This time she was very worried. That night she had had to attend to him in his drunkenness, which was hardly pleasant, even though he was dear to her. Next day she tried to bring up the subject but before she could begin he gave her such a look of enmity that the words died on her lips.

The drinking didn't stop. Her anxiety increased. She would stay behind in the morning, wait for him to sober up and try to talk things over. She told him that they could not carry on as they were, that they were no longer comrades if all they had in common was the bed they shared. She broached the subject of his drunkenness and gave him a warning; then she felt ashamed of herself and started crying. He said nothing until she had finished. Then he spoke, and at first he tried to justify himself. She didn't understand what it was like organising a company with the Nepmen, and they were used to that kind of life. If you didn't play their game, you couldn't get anywhere. But he was thoughtful for a moment and said that it wasn't the kind of life he would have chosen. He pleaded with her not to get upset and admitted she had been right. He came and said goodbye, took her hand in his, looked into her eyes and kissed her like old times. She felt much happier. That day she went about her work with a will. Before the week was out, however, he came in drunk again. When she mentioned it afterwards, he banged his fist on the table. It's nothing to do with you, he shouted, that's how everyone lives. And if you don't like it, nobody's forcing you to stay.

He went out, and she spent the day wandering around feeling dejected. Had he really stopped loving her? Did this mean she would have to leave? But her husband came home unexpectedly early that evening. He was sober and apologetic. They talked all evening. She came to see the situation in a different light. She understood how difficult it was to hold one's own in company like that. They had so much money

and one had to play along with them. He told her about the Nepmen, about their wives and girlfriends. He talked about things in general and about how difficult it was for the proletariat to keep an eye on these sharks. Their conversation depressed her; she had not felt such uncertainty since before the revolution.

It was about this time that she found that staff reductions at her workplace would affect her. This was really a blow. She talked about it with her husband, but he treated the matter with indifference and even went so far as to say that it would be a better arrangement, since she would be at home more and the household would be kept in better order.

"Our flat always looks like nothing on earth. You can't entertain a respectable person here."

She was surprised at this attitude and started arguing. "It's up to you. I won't stand in your way if you want to go on working." He said this and left the room.

It hurt her that her husband didn't understand. He seemed offended that she wanted to work. She decided, nevertheless, to fight to keep her job. She went to see her colleagues over the matter and argued that she was necessary to them. She succeeded in saving her job, but troubles never come singly. She hadn't got over this worry when her baby daughter fell ill.

"I was sitting one night with the sick child," the woman went on, "and I was feeling so lonely. The bell rang. I went to open the door for my husband, pleased that he had come. I hoped that he would be sober and I would be able to share my anxieties with him. I opened the door. At first I could not grasp why he was with someone. A young woman was with him. She had had something to drink and her face was flushed. 'Let me, in, woman,' my husband said, 'I've brought along a girl friend. Don't nag, I'm no worse than other people. We're going to enjoy ourselves. And don't you interfere.'

"I could see that he was so drunk he could hardly stand up straight. I let him into the dining-room and hurried to where the child was. I locked the door and sat there trembling and in a daze. I didn't even feel anger. After all, what kind of behaviour can one expect from a drunken man? But I felt hurt. I could hear everything that was going on in the next room. I would have liked to have sat with my hands over my ears, but I had the child to look after. Luckily they were both very drunk and were soon quiet. Before it was light my husband went out with the woman to see her home; he got back and went to sleep again. I didn't fall asleep till morning. I lay there thinking things over.

"The next evening my husband got home earlier than usual. We hadn't seen each other all day. I hardly said hello, and he started sorting out his papers. We were both silent. I could see he was watching me. First he'll be aggressive, I thought, then he'll ask for forgiveness, and then he'll go his own way again. I can't stand it any more, I thought. I'll go away. My heart was heavy; I had loved him and I loved him even then, and there was no use hiding from it. Now it's different: something has finished, and the emotions have died. But at that time I still loved him. My husband saw me reach for my coat and at this he went into a rage. He seized my arm so violently that I've still got the bruise. He snatched the coat from me and flung it to the floor.

" 'There's no point in throwing a fit of feminine hysterics. Where do you think you're going? What do you want me to do? Just you try finding another husband as good as me. I feed you and clothe you and give you everything you want. Don't you dare stand in judgement over me. If a man wants to get anywhere he has to live as I do.'

"He talked and talked without stopping. I couldn't get a word in edgeways. He seemed to want to bring into the open everything that was on his mind. He reproached me and himself as well. Then he suddenly began justifying his actions and proving his point as if he were arguing with someone. I could see he was suffering. He looked almost ill. I began to feel so sorry for him that I forgot how insulting he had had been and actually began to comfort him, saying things were not that bad and it was the Nepmen who were to blame, not he.

"By evening we had made it up. Mind you, I felt bitter that he should think I had nothing to get worked up and offended about. He said I should not expect anything different from a drunkard. I started asking him to stop drinking. I told him that I hadn't been so upset by the fact that he had brought a prostitute home as by the fact that he had grown coarse and unfeeling.

"He promised to exercise some self-control and to avoid bad company. But although we had made peace I could not forget what had happened. And what can you expect from a drunkard? Perhaps he genuinely remembered nothing. But from that day on something had changed in my heart. I would sit and think that if he loved me like he had done before, during the days of the revolution, he would never have gone after another woman. I recalled how a friend of mine had tried to attract him. She was a better and prettier woman than I, but he hadn't even wanted to look at her. Why though, if he no longer loved me, did he not say it out straight? I tried to talk to him about this. He got angry and started shouting and complaining that I pestered him with

my 'woman's foolishness' when he had more important matters on his mind. All women, myself included, he said, were not worthy even to be spat upon. And with that he walked out.

"And things got even more difficult. The question of my job was raised again. My little girl had been ill all this time, and I was frequently absent from work. Once more I begged and persuaded. And once more they allowed me to stay. I was even more reluctant than before to become dependent upon my husband. It got more and more difficult living with him. We seemed to be strangers. It is possible to live in the same flat with another person and know nothing about them. He hardly ever even so much as glanced at the little girl. I had dropped my political work in the district so that I could look after our daughter. My husband wasn't drinking so much and would come home sober, but it was as if I didn't exist. We didn't sleep together. I slept in one room with the child, and he slept on the divan in the dining-room. Sometimes he would come to me at night, but that gave me no joy. It only made things more complicated. It was just a further insult to add to the others. He would kiss me but my thoughts and feelings didn't interest him. So we lived our separate lives and didn't even speak to each other. He had his own cares and I had mine. But our cares were of the petty kind – until the little girl died. To make matters worse, I had just finally lost my job. I thought that my husband would turn to me now that we had grief to share. But nothing changed. He did not even come to our daughter's funeral because of an urgent meeting.

"So I was left at home alone without a job and with nothing to do. I found some political work; there's plenty to be had in our area. But it was more difficult finding another job. And somehow I felt uncomfortable asking when there are so many unemployed, and everyone knows my husband is an executive and an industrial executive at that. Anyway, it's impossible to find work at the moment, however hard one tries. I did my best to cope with the situation. It was hard being so dependent on my husband, especially as we had become so estranged. But what else could I do? I was waiting and hoping something would change. Women have foolish hearts. I could see that my husband no longer really loved me and I felt sad and resentful about what had happened. But I hoped that the bad times would pass and love would return and things would be fine again as they had been before. I used to wake up in the morning with these hopes and return home from my work in the district thinking that he might be at home and alone. But even when he was there, for all the notice he took of me he might as well have been out. He would be busy with his work, or his Nepmen friends would drop round.

And I sat there waiting for things to change, for something to happen. This went on until something finally did happen. which made me leave him. I've left him for good. I won't go back.

"I arrived home one evening after a meeting. It was after midnight; I wanted some tea, so I started to heat up the samovar. My husband was not yet home, but I didn't feel obliged to wait up for him. Then I heard the door open in the hall which meant my husband had returned; he had his own key so as not to have to wake me. While I was busy with the samovar I remembered that someone had brought him an urgent parcel and that it was lying in my room. So I got the parcel and went to give it to him. And just like the time before, I didn't understand anything at first. A tall, slender woman was standing by my husband. The two of them turned towards me. My eyes met my husband's. I saw straight away that he was sober. That made it worse somehow. I was so upset I wanted to cry out. The woman looked embarrassed.

"I don't know how, but somehow I managed to put the parcel on the table and explain calmly that it was urgent. Then I went away. As soon as I was alone I began to shake all over as if I had a fever. I was afraid I would hear them in the other room so I lay down on my bed and covered my head with the blanket. I didn't want to hear anything or know anything or feel anything. But my thoughts jumped around and tormented me.

"I could hear them whispering. They weren't sleeping. The woman's voice was the louder and it sounded reproachful. Perhaps she was his girl friend and he had deceived her and told her he was single? Or perhaps he was at this very moment promising to give me up? I imagined every conceivable possibility and suffered as if every possibility actually were a reality. The time he was drunk and brought back the prostitute I had not felt so bitter. Now I had to realise that he did not love me. Not even as a comrade or as a sister. If he had felt for me as a friend, he would have been more considerate and not have brought his women to our home. And what women! Women off the street. The woman he had there now was most likely of that category, otherwise she wouldn't have stayed the night like that. I felt such a hatred toward that woman, I was prepared to rush into the other room and throw her out of the house. I thought these kinds of thoughts till dawn. I didn't sleep at all. Everything was quiet, and then suddenly I heard steps along the corridor. The steps were careful, as if the person did not want to be noticed. I knew that it was the girl. The kitchen door was opened and then all was quiet again. She didn't come back. I got out of bed and went into the kitchen. She was sitting on a little stool by the window,

hunched up and crying her heart out. Her fair hair was long and beautiful; it hid her face. Then she looked up, and there was so much distress in her eyes that I was frightened. I went up to her and she rose to meet me. 'Forgive me,' she said, 'for coming to your house. I didn't know that he wasn't living alone. I'm very upset about everything. . . .'

"This surprised me. I began to think that she must be his girl friend, not a prostitute. I managed to ask her if she loved him. She looked at me with such surprise. 'We met for the first time yesterday,' she said. 'He promised to pay me well, and it's all the same to me so long as they pay well.'

"I'm not sure how it happened but she started to tell me her story: how she had lost her job three months ago, how she had sold everything, gone hungry, been without a roof over her head; how she had been in despair because she could no longer send money to her old mother, who wrote that she too was dying of hunger. Then two weeks before she had gone on the street. She had been lucky straight away, had acquired 'good friends' and was now well-fed and clothed and able to send her mother money.

" 'And I'm educated,' the girl had said. 'I've got a certificate. And I'm still very young. I'm nineteen. To think I've fallen so low.'

"You won't believe it," the woman went on, "but as I listened to her my sympathies shifted completely. I began to feel sorry for the girl. I suddenly realised that if I had no husband I would be in exactly the same position as this young woman. That night as I lay in bed and suffered, I had hated the woman; and now, suddenly, all my hate was turned against my husband. How dare he take advantage of a woman's misfortune. And he is supposed to be a politically conscious and responsible worker. Instead of helping a comrade who is out of work, instead of coming to her aid, he buys her. He buys her body for his own pleasure. Such behaviour seemed to me so repulsive that there and then I decided I could not stay and live with a man who acted like that.

"We talked for a long time. We lit the stove and made coffee. My husband was asleep all this while, but suddenly she was in a hurry to be gone. I asked her if she had been paid.

"She blushed and assured me that after our conversation she could not possibly accept any money. She would not dream of taking anything. I saw that she wanted to be gone before my husband woke up. It may seem strange to you, but although I didn't try to persuade her to stay, I didn't want her to go. She was so young and unhappy and alone. I got dressed and went to see her on her way. We walked along for some time and then sat talking in a square. I told her about my own

problems. I wanted her, though, to accept my last wage-packet. She tried to refuse, but eventually she took the money. First, she made me promise that I would turn to her if ever I were in financial need. We parted like sisters.

"All feeling for my husband had died. I felt neither resentment nor pain. It was if I had never loved him. When I got home he tried to explain himself but I didn't need explanations. I didn't cry or reproach him. And the next day I moved to friends and started looking for a job. That was three weeks ago and I've found nothing, and there is no reason to hope that my luck will change. A few days ago, when I saw that it was inconvenient to go on staying with my friend, I went to see the girl as I had promised, but it turned out that she had been taken into hospital the day before. So now I'm wandering around without money or work or a place to go. And I ask myself whether my fate will be the same?"

The woman talked. Her eyes seemed to question life. You could catch in her look all the despair, all the horror of being a woman alone and faced with unemployment.

Here was a woman trying to be independent and trying to fight the old way of life. She went, but her look of despair haunted me. It demanded an answer . . . it demanded action . . . it demanded struggle.

Theses on Communist Morality in the Sphere of Marital Relations

Family and marriage are historical categories, phenomena which develop in accordance with the economic relations that exist at the given level of production. The form of marriage and of the family is thus determined by the economic system of the given epoch, and it changes as the economic base of society changes. The family, in the same way as government, religion, science, morals, law and customs, is part of the superstructure which derives from the economic system of society.

Where economic functions are performed by the family rather than by society as a whole, family and marital relations are more stable and possess a vital capacity: "The less the development of labour, and the more limited its volume of production . . . the more preponderantly does the social order appear to be dominated by ties of sex" (Engels, **Origins of the Family**). In the period of natural economy the family formed an enclosed economic unit which was necessary for humankind and thus had a vital capacity. The family was at that time a unit of both production and consumption. Outside the family/economic unit the individual had no means, especially at the earliest levels of the development of society, of sustaining the conditions necessary for life. In some areas and in some countries where capitalism is weakly developed (among the peoples of the East, for example) the peasant family is still fundamentally a family/economic union. With the transition, however, from a natural economy to a merchant capitalist economy based on trade and exchange, the family ceases to be necessary for the functioning of society and thus loses its strength and vital capacity.

The fact that with the consolidation of the capitalist system of production, the marital/family union develops from a production unit into a legal arrangement concerned only with consumption, leads inevitably to the weakening of marital/family ties. In the era of private property and the bourgeois-capitalist economic system, marriage and the family are grounded in (a) material and financial considerations, (b) economic dependence of the female sex on the family breadwinner – the husband – rather than the social collective, and (c) the need to care for the rising generation. Capitalism maintains a system of individual economies; the family has a role to play in performing economic tasks and functions within the national capitalist economy. Thus under capi-

talism the family does not merge with or dissolve into the national economy but continues to exist as an independent economic unit, concerned with production in the case of the peasant family and consumption in the case of the urban family. The individual economy which springs from private property is the basis of the bourgeois family.

The communist economy does away with the family. In the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat there is a transition to the single production plan and collective social consumption, and the family loses its significance as an economic unit. The external economic functions of the family disappear, and consumption ceases to be organised on an individual family basis; a network of social kitchens and canteens is established, and the making, mending and washing of clothes and other aspects of housework are integrated into the national economy. In the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat the family economic unit should be recognised as being, from the point of view of the national economy, not only useless but harmful. The family economic unit involves (a) the uneconomic expenditure of products and fuel on the part of small domestic economies, and (b) unproductive labour, especially by women, in the home – and is therefore in conflict with the interest of the workers' republic in a single economic plan and the expedient use of the labour force (including women).

Under the dictatorship of the proletariat then, the material and economic considerations in which the family was grounded cease to exist. The economic dependence of women on men and the role of the family in the care of the younger generation also disappear, as the communist elements in the workers' republic grow stronger. With the introduction of the obligation of all citizens to work, woman has a value in the national economy which is independent of her family and marital status. The economic subjugation of women in marriage and the family is done away with, and responsibility for the care of the children and their physical and spiritual education is assumed by the social collective. The family teaches and instils egoism, thus weakening the ties of the collective and hindering the construction of communism. However, in the new society relations between parents and children are freed from any element of material considerations and enter a new historic stage.

Once the family has been stripped of its economic functions and its responsibilities towards the younger generation and is no longer central to the existence of the woman, it has ceased to be a family. The family unit shrinks to a union of two people based on mutual agreement.

In the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the workers' state has to concern itself not with the economic and social unit of the

family, since this unit dies as the bonds of communism are consolidated, but with the changing forms of marital relations. The family as an economic unit and as a union of parents and children based on the need to provide for the material welfare of the latter is doomed to disappear. Thus the workers' collective has to establish its attitude not to economic relationships but to the form of relationships between the sexes. What kind of relations between the sexes are in the best interests of the workers' collective? What form of relations would strengthen, not weaken, the collective in the transitional stage between capitalism and communism and would thus assist the construction of the new society? The laws and the morality that the workers' system is evolving are beginning to give an answer to this question.

Once relations between the sexes cease to perform the economic and social function of the former family, they are no longer the concern of the workers' collective. It is not the relationships between the sexes but the result – the child – that concerns the collective. The workers' state recognises its responsibility to provide for maternity, i.e. to guarantee the well-being of the woman and the child, but it does not recognise the couple as a legal unit separate from the workers' collective. The decrees on marriage issued by the workers' republic establishing the mutual rights of the married couple (the right to demand material support from the partner for yourself or the child), and thus giving legal encouragement to the separation of this unit and its interests from the general interests of the workers' social collective (the right of wives to be transferred to the town or village where their husbands are working), are survivals of the past; they contradict the interests of the collective and weaken its bonds, and should therefore be reviewed and changed.

The law ought to emphasise the interest of the workers' collective in maternity and eliminate the situation where the child is dependent on the relationship between its parents. The law of the workers' collective replaces the right of the parents, and the workers' collective keeps a close watch, in the interests of the unified economy and of present and future labour resources. In the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat there must, instead of marriage law, be regulation of the relationship of the government to maternity, of the relationship between mother and child and of the relationship between the mother and the workers' collective (i.e. legal norms must regulate the protection of female labour, the welfare of expectant and nursing mothers, the welfare of children and their social education). Legal norms must regulate the relationship between the mother and the socially educated child, and between the father and the child. Fatherhood should not be established through

marriage or a relationship of a material nature. The man should be able to choose whether or not to accept the role of fatherhood (i.e. the right which he shares equally with the mother to decide on a social system of education for the child, and the right, where this does not conflict with the interests of the collective, of intellectual contact with the child and the opportunity to influence its development).

There are two grounds on which, in the interests of the workers' collective, the relationships between the sexes ought to be subject to legislative regulations: (a) the health and hygiene of the nation and the race, and (b) the increase or decrease of the population required by the national economic collective. In the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the regulation of relationships enters a new phase. Instead of laws and the threat of legal proceedings, the workers' collective must rely on agitational and educational influences, and on social measures to improve the relationships between the sexes and to guarantee the health of the children born from these relationships. For example, the Commissariats of Health and Education must carry out a broad campaign on the question of venereal and other infectious diseases, thereby reducing the danger of these diseases spreading through sexual intercourse and daily living. A person is guilty before the law not for having had sexual relations but for having consciously kept silent and hidden the fact that he or she has the disease from those with whom he or she lives and works, and thus for failing to observe the rule on precautions to be taken to reduce the likelihood of infection.

In the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, communist morality – and not the law – regulates sexual relationships in the interest of the workers' collective and of future generations.

Each historical (and therefore economic) epoch in the development of society has its own ideal of marriage and its own sexual morality. Under the tribal system, with its ties of kinship, the morality was different from that which developed with the establishment of private property and the rule of the husband and father (patriarchy). Different economic systems have different moral codes. Not only each stage in the development of society, but each class has its corresponding sexual morality (it is sufficient to compare the morals of the feudal landowning class and of the bourgeoisie in one and the same epoch to see that this is true). The more firmly established the principles of private property, the stricter the moral code. The importance of virginity before legal marriage sprang from the principles of private property and the unwillingness of men to pay for the children of others.

Hypocrisy (the outward observance of decorum and the actual

practice of depravity), and the double code (one code of behaviour for the man and another for the woman) are the twin pillars of bourgeois morality. Communist morality must, above all, resolutely spurn all the hypocrisy inherited from bourgeois society in relationships between the sexes, and reject the double standard of morality.

In the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, relations between the sexes should be evaluated only according to the criteria mentioned above – the health of the working population and the development of inner bonds of solidarity within the collective. The sexual act must be seen not as something shameful and sinful but as something which is as natural as the other needs of healthy organism, such as hunger and thirst. Such phenomena cannot be judged as moral or immoral. The satisfaction of healthy and natural instincts only ceases to be normal when the boundaries of hygiene are overstepped. In such cases, not only the health of the person concerned but the interests of the work collective, which needs the strength and energy and health of its members, are threatened. Communist morality, therefore, while openly recognising the normality of sexual interests, condemns unhealthy and unnatural interest in sex (excesses, for example, or sexual relations before maturity has been reached, which exhaust the organism and lower the capacity of men and women for work).

As communist morality is concerned for the health of the population, it also criticises sexual restraint. The preservation of health includes the full and correct satisfaction of all man's needs; norms of hygiene should work to this end, and not artificially suppress such an important function of the organism as the sex drive (Bebel, **Woman and Socialism**). Thus both early sexual experience (before the body has developed and grown strong) and sexual restraint must be seen as equally harmful. This concern for the health of the human race does not establish either monogamy or polygamy as the obligatory form of relations between the sexes, for excesses may be committed in the bounds of the former, and a frequent change of partners by no means signifies sexual intemperance. Science has discovered that when a woman has relationships with many men at one time, her ability to have children is impaired; and relationships with a number of women drain the man and affect the health of his children negatively. Since the workers' collective needs strong and healthy men and women, such arrangements of sexual life are not in its interests.

It is accepted that the psychological state of parents at the moment of conception influences the health and life capacity of the child. Thus in the interests of human health, communist morality

criticises sexual relations which are based on physical attraction alone and are not attended by love or fleeting passion. In the interests of the collective, communist morality also criticises persons whose sexual relationships are built not on physical attraction but on calculation, habit or even intellectual affinity.

In view of the need to encourage the development and growth of feelings of solidarity and to strengthen the bonds of the work collective, it should above all be established that the isolation of the "couple" as a special unit does not answer the interests of communism. Communist morality requires the education of the working class in comradeship and the fusion of the hearts and minds of the separate members of this collective. The needs and interests of the individual must be subordinated to the interests and aims of the collective. On the one hand, therefore, the bonds of family and marriage must be weakened, and on the other, men and women need to be educated in solidarity and the subordination of the will of the individual to the will of the collective. Even at this present, early stage, the workers' republic demands that mothers learn to be the mothers not only of their own child but of all workers' children; it does not recognise the couple as a self-sufficient unit, and does not therefore approve of wives deserting work for the sake of this unit.

As regards sexual relations, communist morality demands first of all an end to all relations based on financial or other economic considerations. The buying and selling of caresses destroys the sense of equality between the sexes, and thus undermines the basis of solidarity without which communist society cannot exist. Moral censure is consequently directed at prostitution in all its forms and at all types of marriage of convenience, even when recognised by Soviet law. The preservation of marriage regulations creates the illusion that the workers' collective can accept the "couple" with its special, exclusive interests. The stronger the ties between the members of the collective as a whole, the less the need to reinforce marital relations. Secondly, communist morality demands the education of the younger generation in responsibility to the collective and in the consciousness that love is not the only thing in life (this is especially important in the case of women, for they have been taught the opposite for centuries). Love is only one aspect of life, and must not be allowed to overshadow the other facets of the relationships between individual and collective. The ideal of the bourgeoisie was the married couple, where the partners complemented each other so completely that they had no need of contact with society. Communist morality demands, on the contrary, that the younger generation

be educated in such a way that the personality of the individual is developed to the full, and the individual with his or her many interests has contact with a range of persons of both sexes. Communist morality encourages the development of many and varied bonds of love and friendship among people. The old ideal was "all for the loved one"; communist morality demands all for the collective.

Though sex love is seen in the context of the interests of the collective, communist morality demands that people are educated in sensitivity and understanding and are psychologically demanding both to themselves and to their partners. The bourgeois attitude to sexual relations as simply a matter of sex must be criticised and replaced by an understanding of the whole gamut of joyful love-experience that enriches life and makes for greater happiness. The greater the intellectual and emotional development of the individual the less place will there be in his or her relationship for the bare physiological side of love, and the brighter will be the love experience.

In the transitional period, relations between men and women must, in order to meet the interests of the workers' collective, be based on the following considerations. (1) All sexual relationships must be based on mutual inclination, love, infatuation or passion, and in no case on financial or material motivations. All calculation in relationships must be subject to merciless condemnation. (2) The form and length of the relationship are not regulated, but the hygiene of the race and communist morality require that relationships be based not on the sexual act alone, and that it should not be accompanied by any excesses that threaten health. (3) Those with illnesses etc. that might be inherited should not have children. (4) A jealous and proprietary attitude to the person loved must be replaced by a comradely understanding of the other and an acceptance of his or her freedom. Jealousy is a destructive force of which communist morality cannot approve. (5) The bonds between the members of the collective must be strengthened. The encouragement of the intellectual and political interests of the younger generation assists the development of healthy and bright emotions in love.

The stronger the collective, the more firmly established becomes the communist way of life. The closer the emotional ties between the members of the community, the less the need to seek a refuge from loneliness in marriage. Under communism the blind strength of matter is subjugated to the will of the strongly welded and thus unprecedentedly powerful workers' collective. The individual has the opportunity to develop intellectually and emotionally as never before. In this collective, new forms of relationships are maturing and the concept of love is extended and expanded.

Soon (In 48 Years' Time)

7 January 1970. It's warm and bright, and there is a lively and festive atmosphere in the "House of Rest" where the veterans of the "Great Years" of the world revolution spend their days.

The veterans decided that on the day that had once been Christmas Day they would recall their childhood and youth by decorating a tree. A real fir tree just like in the years before the world upheavals. The young children and the older girls and boys were enthusiastic about the idea. Especially when they heard that "red grandmother" was going to tell stories about the great years of 1917. There was no problem in getting the tree. They came to an agreement with the man in charge of forestry conservation, persuading this vigilant guardian of the plant kingdom that the forest would not be ruined by the loss of one tree stolen for such a strange and unusual festival. The candles were more difficult. The new method of lighting, using reflected light rays, had not only done away with kerosene-wick lamps once and for all, but had banished electricity to the far distant provinces where the latest innovations had yet to be introduced. The younger generation had never seen candles, and the veterans of the "great years" had to explain them with the help of diagrams. A special conference of people who had been members of the people's economic council during the revolutionary period was called to discuss ways of producing the candles. The young people, with their clever heads and clever hands, were there to help.

After a number of failures, misunderstandings and unexpected difficulties they managed to decorate the tree with paper decorations of various colours, with candies, nuts, sweet juicy oranges, rosy apples and home-made candles in home-made candle-holders. The veterans and the children were unanimously of the opinion that Commune Ten had not seen such an original and interesting festival for a long time. The young people enjoyed themselves as the young have always done. They laughed and joked. There were songs, games and dances.

But you only had to take one look at the girls and boys to see how they differed from the young people who had fought at the barricades during the "great years" and from those who had lived under the yoke of capitalism. The young people of Commune Ten were healthy, their bodies were fine and supple and strong. The girls had long, luxurious plaits which they arranged carefully. For the commune strictly followed

the rule that every member should have time for relaxation and the care of his or her person. The communards loved beauty and simplicity, and they did not force or distort nature. The young men were dressed in attractive clothes that allowed for their free movement. Their hands were obviously strong and able. There was not one sick, pale or exhausted face among all the young people who had gathered for the "fir-tree" festival. Their eyes shone brightly and their bodies were strong and firm. Their happy laughter filled the bright, festive hall, and that was the most joyful change of all. The young people of Commune Ten loved life and loved to laugh. They only frowned when it came to battling against the only enemy, nature. However, they did not frown because the struggle was not to their taste, but in order to concentrate better and choose the best way to win.

The struggle of men and women to control their environment was still in progress. The more victories they won, the more mysteries there were to be solved. But the young people were not afraid of the battle. What would life be like without struggle, without the need to stretch the mind and strive forward towards the unknown and the unattainable? Life on the commune would be dull without it.

The life of the commune is organised in the most rational way. Everyone has a profession and everyone has some favourite pursuit. Everyone works at their own vocation for two hours a day, contributing in this way to the running of the commune. The rest of the time the individual is free to devote his or her energies to the type of work that he or she enjoys – to science, technology, art, agriculture or teaching. Young men and women work together at the same professions. Life is organised so that people do not live in families but in groups, according to their ages. Children have their "palaces", the young people their smaller houses; adults live communally in the various ways that suit them, and the old people together in their "houses". In the communes there are no rich people and no poor people; the very words "rich" and "poor" have no meaning and have been forgotten. The members of the commune do not have to worry about their material needs, for they are provided with everything: food, clothes, books and entertainment. In return for this the individual provides two hours' daily work for the commune, and the rest of the time the discoveries of a creative and enquiring mind. The commune has no enemies, for all the neighbouring peoples and nations have long since organised themselves in a similar fashion and the world is a federation of communes. The younger generation does not know what war is.

The young people insisted that the veterans of the "great years"

tell them about the battles between the Reds and the Whites. But the veterans were not anxious to talk about war on the "day of the fir tree". They thought it more appropriate to speak about the leaders of the revolutions. They promised to begin their stories when the candles had burned low and everyone had been given their sweets. The young people hurried to bring the glass trolleys into the hall. The sweets they liked so much were laid out in gaily coloured, artistically decorated bowls. The sooner we've had our sweets and the candles on the fir tree have finished burning the better, thought the children. But the veterans watched the lights burn low with a sense of sadness. The candles reminded them, it is true, of that old and long-forgotten system of capitalism which they had so hated in their youth; but the past had been ennobled by their great striving for progress. Their dreams had been fulfilled, but life was now passing them by and their old limbs could not match the bold flights of the young people. Much of the life and many of the aspirations of the young people were incomprehensible to them.

"Grandad, I know what the word 'capitalist' means," boasted a lively lad who was tucking into the special holiday pie. "And I know what a ruble is and what a money is."

"We saw money in a museum. Did you have money, grandad? Did you carry it in a little bag in your pocket? And then there were people . . . now what were they called? . . . Thieves . . . that's right, isn't it? And they took money out of the pockets of their comrades. How very strange it must have been."

And they all laughed at the strange past.

The veterans of the revolution somehow felt awkward and embarrassed about the past, when there had been capitalists and thieves and money and ladies. The last of the candles flickered out, and the trolleys were rolled to one side. The young people gathered impatiently around the story-tellers.

"Grandmother, red grandmother, tell us about Lenin. You saw him, didn't you? Did he live just like everyone else? Did he eat and drink and laugh? Did Lenin ever look at the stars, grandmother?"

These young people had their own way of looking at everything. What had the stars got to do with it? When Lenin was alive there had been so much to do on the earth itself. There had been hunger and exhaustion. War and hunger . . . hunger and war. A time of suffering and bloodshed, but also of bravery, self-sacrifice and heroism, and of tremendous faith in the victory of the revolution and the justice of the struggle. "Red grandmother" wanted the young people to understand the grandeur

of the social struggle. But the young people listened as the veterans had once listened to the Christmas story: "capital", "profit", "private property", "front", "Cheka", "speculation", "soldiers" – all this was just so much "historical vocabulary" that the children heard at school when they were learning about the "Great Years of the Revolution".

The young people of the world commune are turning their attention to the cosmos; the sky beckons them. They do not understand the grandeur of the old struggles. They cannot appreciate either excitement or the fears and anxieties of the past.

"Did you actually shoot people, shoot at living people?"

The eyes of the young people showed surprise and sparkled with reproach and bewilderment. Life was sacred.

"We were fighting for our lives, though. We sacrificed everything for the revolution," red grandmother said in justification.

"Just as we dedicate ourselves to the commune," was the proud reply of the young people.

Red grandmother fell silent. Life had forged ahead. The "great years" were now only history. The younger generation could not respond as they had done to the stories of the worldwide barricades and "the last fight". The social question was settled. The ideas of communism had justified themselves. Mankind was free from the slavery of backbreaking work for others, from material dependence and from the struggle for daily bread. New and larger problems confronted humanity, challenging the searching and dauntless spirit of men and women. In comparison with these horizons, the previous struggle against social forces seemed to the young people of 1970 an easy question.

"Hunger? You went hungry? You must have been very unorganised and very ignorant."

"Ignorant", "unorganised" – the young people could pass no sterner judgement on red grandmother's contemporaries.

"But without us and our firm faith in the triumph of communism, without our fierce and determined struggle against capitalism and the enemies of the workers, you would never have known the benefits of universal organisation and the joy of free creative work."

"We understand, But our tasks are on an even larger scale."

The young people held their heads high, facing the future boldly. They turned their eyes to the stars and the dark backcloth of the sky, visible through the wide windows of the festival hall.

"You achieved your aims, and we will achieve ours. You subdued the social forces; we will subdue nature. Sing with us, red grandmother, the new hymn of struggle with the elements. You know the tune. It is

your own 'International', but the words are new. They call us to struggle, to achieve things, to move forward. Let the fir-tree burn out. Our festival is in front of us. Our festival is a life of endeavour and discovery."

Sexual Relations and the Class Struggle

Among the many problems that demand the consideration and attention of contemporary mankind, sexual problems are undoubtedly some of the most crucial. There isn't a country or a nation, apart from the legendary "islands", where the question of sexual relationships isn't becoming an urgent and burning issue. Mankind today is living through an acute sexual crisis which is far more unhealthy and harmful for being long and drawn-out. Throughout the long journey of human history, you probably won't find a time when the problems of sex have occupied such a central place in the life of society; when the question of relationships between the sexes has been like a conjuror, attracting the attention of millions of troubled people; when sexual dramas have served as such a never-ending source of inspiration for every sort of art.

As the crisis continues and grows more serious, people are getting themselves into an increasingly hopeless situation, and are trying desperately by every available means to settle the "insoluble question". But with every new attempt to solve the problem, the confused knot of personal relationships gets more tangled. It's as if we couldn't see the one and only thread that could finally lead us to success in controlling the stubborn tangle. The sexual problem is like a vicious circle, and however frightened people are and however much they run this way and that, they are unable to break out.

The conservatively inclined part of mankind argue that we should return to the happy times of the past, we should re-establish the old foundations of the family and strengthen the well-tried norms of sexual morality. The champions of bourgeois individualism say that we ought to destroy all the hypocritical restrictions of the obsolete code of sexual behaviour. These unnecessary and repressive "rags" ought to be relegated to the archives – only the individual conscience, the individual will of each person can decide such intimate questions. Socialists, on the other hand, assure us that sexual problems will only be settled when the basic reorganisation of the social and economic structure of society has been tackled. Doesn't this "putting off the problem until tomorrow" suggest that we still haven't found that one and only "magic thread"? Shouldn't we find or at least locate this "magic thread" that promises

to unravel the tangle? Shouldn't we find it now, at this very moment?

The history of human society, the history of the continual battle between various social groups and classes of opposing aims and interests, gives us the clue to finding this "thread". It isn't the first time that mankind has gone through a sexual crisis. This isn't the first time that the pressure of a rushing tide of new values and ideals has blurred the clear and definite meaning of moral commandments about sexual relationships. The "sexual crisis" was particularly acute at the time of the Renaissance and the Reformation, when a great social advance pushed the proud and patriarchal feudal nobility who were used to absolute command into the background, and cleared the way for the development and establishment of a new social force – the bourgeoisie. The sexual morality of the feudal world had developed out of the depths of the "tribal way of life" – the collective economy and the tribal authoritarian leadership that stifles the individual will of the individual member. This clashed with the new and strange moral code of the rising bourgeoisie. The sexual morality of the bourgeoisie is founded on principles that are in sharp contradiction to the basic morality of feudalism. Strict individualism and the exclusiveness and isolation of the "nuclear family" replace the emphasis on "collective work" that was characteristic of both the local and regional economic structure of patrimonial life. Under capitalism the ethic of competition, the triumphant principles of individualism and exclusive private property, grew and destroyed whatever remained of the idea of the community, which was to some extent common to all types of tribal life. For a whole century, while the complex laboratory of life was turning the old norms into a new formula and achieving the outward harmony of moral ideas, men wandered confusedly between two very different sexual codes and attempted to accommodate themselves to both.

But in those bright and colourful days of change, the sexual crisis, although profound, did not have the threatening character that it has assumed in our time. The main reason for this is that in "the great days" of the Renaissance, in the "new age" when the bright light of a new spiritual culture flooded the dying world with its clear colours, flooded the bare monotonous life of the Middle Ages, the sexual crisis affected only a relatively small part of the population. By far the largest section of the population, the peasantry, was affected only in the most indirect way and only as, slowly, over the course of centuries, a change in the economic base, in the economic relations of the countryside, took place. At the top of the social ladder a bitter battle between two opposing social worlds was fought out. This involved also a struggle between their different ideals and values and ways of looking at things. It was these

people who experienced and were threatened by the sexual crisis that developed. The peasants, wary of new things, continued to cling firmly to the well-tried tribal tradition handed down from their forefathers, and only under the pressure of extreme necessity modified and adapted this tradition to the changing conditions of their economic environment. Even at the height of the struggle between the bourgeois and the feudal world the sexual crisis by-passed the "class of tax-payers". As the upper strata of society went about breaking up the old ways, the peasants in fact seemed to be more intent on clinging firmly to their traditions. In spite of the continuous whirlwinds that threatened overhead and shook the very soil under their feet, the peasants, especially our Russian peasantry, managed to preserve the basis of their sexual code untouched and unshaken for many centuries.

The story today is very different. The "sexual crisis" does not spare even the peasantry. Like an infectious disease it "knows neither rank nor status". It spreads from the palaces and mansions to the crowded quarters of the working class, looks in on the peaceful dwelling places of the petty bourgeoisie, and makes its way into the heart of the countryside. It claims victims in the villas of the European bourgeoisie, in the fusty basement of the worker's family, and in the smoky hut of the peasant. There is "no defence, no bolt" against sexual conflict. To imagine that only the members of the well-off sections of society are floundering and are in the throes of these problems would be to make a grave mistake. The waves of the sexual crisis are sweeping over the threshold of workers' homes, and creating situations of conflict that are as acute and heartfelt as the psychological sufferings of the "refined bourgeois world". The sexual crisis no longer interests only the "propertied". The problems of sex concern the largest section of society – they concern the working class in its daily life. It is therefore hard to understand why this vital and urgent subject is treated with such indifference. This indifference is unforgivable. One of the tasks that confront the working class in its attack on the "beleaguered fortress of the future" is undoubtedly the task of establishing more healthy and more joyful relationships between the sexes.

What are the roots of this unforgivable indifference to one of the essential tasks of the working class? How can we explain to ourselves the hypocritical way in which "sexual problems" are relegated to the realm of "private matters" that are not worth the effort and attention of the collective? Why has the fact been ignored that throughout history one of the constant features of social struggle has been the attempt to change relationships between the sexes, and the type of moral

codes that determine these relationships; and that the way personal relationships are organised in a certain social group has had a vital influence on the outcome of the struggle between hostile social classes?

The tragedy of our society is not just that the usual forms of behaviour and the principles regulating this behaviour are breaking down, but that a spontaneous wave of new attempts at living is developing from within the social fabric, giving man hopes and ideals that cannot yet be realised. We are people living in the world of property relationships, a world of sharp class contradictions and of an individualistic morality. We still live and think under the heavy hand of an unavoidable loneliness of spirit. Man experiences this "loneliness" even in towns full of shouting, noise and people, even in a crowd of close friends and work-mates. Because of their loneliness men are apt to cling in a predatory and unhealthy way to illusions about finding a "soul mate" from among the members of the opposite sex. They see sly Eros as the only means of charming away, if only for a time, the gloom of inescapable loneliness.

People have perhaps never in any age felt spiritual loneliness as deeply and persistently as at the present time. People have probably never become so depressed and fallen so fully under the numbing influence of this loneliness. It could hardly be otherwise. The darkness never seems so black as when there's a light shining just ahead.

The "individualists", who are only loosely organised into a collective with other individuals, now have the chance to change their sexual relationships so that they are based on the creative principle of friendship and togetherness rather than on something blindly physiological. The individualistic property morality of the present day is beginning to seem very obviously paralysing and oppressive. In criticising the quality of sexual relationships modern man is doing far more than rejecting the outdated forms of behaviour of the current moral code. His lonely soul is seeking the regeneration of the very essence of these relationships. He moans and pines for "great love", for a situation of warmth and creativity which alone has the power to disperse the cold spirit of loneliness from which present day "individualists" suffer.

If the sexual crisis is three quarters the result of external socio-economic relationships, the other quarter hinges on our "refined individualistic psyche", fostered by the ruling bourgeois ideology. The "potential for loving" of people today is, as the German writer Meisel-Hess puts it, at a low ebb. Men and women seek each other in the hope of finding for themselves, through another person, a means to a larger share of spiritual and physical pleasure. It makes no difference whether

they are married to the partner or not, they give little thought to what's going on in the other person, to what's happening to their emotions and psychological processes.

The "crude individualism" that adorns our era is perhaps nowhere as blatant as in the organisation of sexual relationships. A person wants to escape from his loneliness and naïvely imagines that being "in love" gives him the right to the soul of the other person – the right to warm himself in the rays of that rare blessing of emotional closeness and understanding. We individualists have had our emotions spoiled in the persistent cult of the "ego". We imagine that we can reach the happiness of being in a state of "great love" with those near to us, without having to "give" up anything of ourselves.

The claims we make on our "contracted partner" are absolute and undivided. We are unable to follow the simplest rule of love – that another person should be treated with great consideration. New concepts of the relationships between the sexes are already being outlined. They will teach us to achieve relationships based on the unfamiliar ideas of complete freedom, equality and genuine friendship. But in the meantime mankind has to sit in the cold with its spiritual loneliness and can only dream about the "better age" when all relationships between people will be warmed by the rays of "the sun god", will experience a sense of togetherness, and will be educated in the new conditions of living. The sexual crisis cannot be solved unless there is a radical reform of the human psyche, and unless man's potential for loving is increased. And a basic transformation of the socio-economic relationships along communist lines is essential if the psyche is to be re-formed. This is an "old truth" but there is no other way out. The sexual crisis will in no way be reduced, whatever kind of marriage or personal relationships people care to try.

History has never seen such a variety of personal relationships – indissoluble marriage with its "stable family", "free unions", secret adultery; a girl living quite openly with her lover in so-called "wild marriage"; pair marriage, marriage in threes and even the complicated marriage of four people – not to talk of the various forms of commercial prostitution. You get the same two moral codes existing side by side in the peasantry as well – a mixture of the old tribal way of life and the developing bourgeois family. Thus you get the permissiveness of the girls' house* side by side with the attitude that fornication, or men sleeping

* In the traditional Russian villages, the young girls would often get together to rent an old hut or a room in someone's house. They would gather there in the

with their daughters-in-law, is a disgrace. It's surprising that, in the face of the contradictory and tangled forms of present-day personal relationships, people are able to preserve a faith in moral authority, and are able to make sense of these contradictions and thread their way through these mutually destructive and incompatible moral codes. Even the usual justification – "I live by the new morality" – doesn't help anyone, since the new morality is still only in the process of being formed. Our task is to draw out from the chaos of present-day contradictory sexual norms the shape, and make clear the principles, of a morality that answers the spirit of the progressive and revolutionary class.

Besides the already mentioned inadequacies of the contemporary psyche – extreme individuality, egoism that has become a cult – the "sexual crisis" is made worse by two characteristics of the psychology of modern man:

1. The idea of "possessing" the married partner;
2. The belief that the two sexes are unequal, that they are of unequal worth in every way, in every sphere, including the sexual sphere.

Bourgeois morality, with its introverted individualistic family based entirely on private property, has carefully cultivated the idea that one partner should completely "possess" the other. It has been very successful. The idea of "possession" is more pervasive now than under the patrimonial system of marriage relationships. During the long historical period that developed under the aegis of the "tribe", the idea of a man possessing his wife (there has never been any thought of a wife having undisputed possession of her husband) did not go further than a purely physical possession. The wife was obliged to be faithful physically – her soul was her own. Even the knights recognised the right of their wives to have *chichesbi* (platonic friends and admirers) and to receive the "devotion" of other knights and minnesingers. It is the bourgeoisie who have carefully tended and fostered the ideal of absolute possession of the "contracted partner's" emotional as well as physical "I", thus extending the concept of property rights to include the right to the other person's whole spiritual and emotional world. Thus the family structure was strengthened and stability guaranteed in the period when the bourgeoisie were struggling for domination. This is the ideal that we have accepted as our heritage and have been prepared to see as an unchange-

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evenings to tell stories, do needlework and sing. The young men would come to join in the merrymaking. Sometimes it seems that the merrymaking would become an orgy, though there are conflicting ideas about this.

able moral absolute! The idea of "property" goes far beyond the boundaries of "lawful marriage". It makes itself felt as an inevitable ingredient of the most "free" union of love. Contemporary lovers with all their respect for freedom are not satisfied by the knowledge of the physical faithfulness alone of the person they love. To be rid of the eternally present threat of loneliness, we "launch an attack" on the emotions of the person we love with a cruelty and lack of delicacy that will not be understood by future generations. We demand the right to know every secret of this person's being. The modern lover would forgive physical unfaithfulness sooner than "spiritual" unfaithfulness. He sees any emotion experienced outside the boundaries of the "free" relationship as the loss of his own personal treasure.

People "in love" are unbelievably insensitive in their relations to a third person. We have all no doubt observed this strange situation – two people who love each other are in a hurry, before they have got to know each other properly, to exercise their rights over all the relationships that the other person has formed up till that time, to look into the innermost corners of their partner's life. Two people who yesterday were unknown to each other, and who come together in a single moment of mutual erotic feeling, rush to get at the heart of the other person's being. They want to feel that this strange and incomprehensible psyche, with its past experience that can never be suppressed, is an extension of their own self. The idea that the married pair are each other's property is so accepted that when a young couple who were yesterday each living their own separate lives are today opening each other's correspondence without a blush, and making common property of the words of a third person who is a friend of only one of them, this hardly strikes us as something unnatural. But this kind of "intimacy" is only really possible when people have been working out their lives together for a long period of time. Usually a dishonest kind of closeness is substituted for this genuine feeling, the deception being fostered by the mistaken idea that a physical relationship between two people is a sufficient basis for extending the rights of possession to each other's emotional being.

The "inequality" of the sexes – the inequality of their rights, the unequal value of their physical and emotional experience – is the other significant circumstance that distorts the psyche of contemporary man and is a reason for the deepening of the "sexual crisis". The "double morality" inherent in both patrimonial and bourgeois society has, over the course of centuries, poisoned the psyche of men and women. These attitudes are so much a part of us that they are more difficult to get rid of than the ideas about possessing people that we have inherited only

from bourgeois ideology. The idea that the sexes are unequal, even in the sphere of physical and emotional experience, means that the same action will be regarded differently according to whether it was the action of a man or a woman. Even the most "progressive" member of the bourgeoisie, who has long ago rejected the whole code of current morality, easily catches himself out at this point since he too in judging a man and a woman for the same behaviour will pass different sentences. One simple example is enough. Imagine that a member of the middle-class intelligensia who is learned, involved in politics and social affairs – who is in short a "personality", even a "public figure" – starts sleeping with his cook (a not uncommon thing to happen) and even becomes legally married to her. Does bourgeois society change its attitude to this man, does the event throw even the tiniest shadow of doubt as to his moral worth? Of course not.

Now imagine another situation. A respected woman of bourgeois society – a social figure, a research student, a doctor, or a writer, it's all the same – becomes friendly with her footman, and to complete the scandal marries him. How does bourgeois society react to the behaviour of the hitherto "respected" woman? They cover her with "scorn", of course! And remember, it's so much the worse for her if her husband, the footman, is good-looking or possesses other "physical qualities". "It's obvious what she's fallen for", will be the sneer of the hypocritical bourgeoisie.

If a woman's choice has anything of an "individual character" about it she won't be forgiven by bourgeois society. This attitude is a kind of throwback to the traditions of tribal times. Society still wants a woman to take into account, when she is making her choice, rank and status and the instructions and interests of her family. Bourgeois society cannot see a woman as an independent person separate from her family unit and outside the isolated circle of domestic obligations and virtues. Contemporary society goes even further than the ancient tribal society in acting as woman's trustee, instructing her not only to marry but to fall in love only with those people who are "worthy" of her.

We are continually meeting men of considerable spiritual and intellectual qualities who have chosen as their friend-for-life a worthless and empty woman, who in no way matches the spiritual worth of the husband. We accept this as something normal and we don't think twice about it. At the most friends might pity Ivan Ivanovich for having landed himself with such an unbearable wife. But if it happens the other way round, we flap our hands and exclaim with concern, "How could such an outstanding woman as Maria Petrovna fall for such a nonentity? I

begin to doubt the worth of Maria Petrovna." Where do we get this double criterion from? What is the reason for it? The reason is undoubtedly that the idea of the sexes being of "different value" has become, over the centuries, a part of man's psychological make-up. We are used to evaluating a woman not as a personality with individual qualities and failings irrespective of her physical and emotional experience, but only as an appendage of a man. This man, the husband or the lover, throws the light of his personality over the woman, and it is this reflection and not the woman herself that we consider to be the true definition of her emotional and moral make-up. In the eyes of society the personality of a man can be more easily separated from his actions in the sexual sphere. The personality of a woman is judged almost exclusively in terms of her sexual life. This type of attitude stems from the role that women have played in society over the centuries, and it is only now that a re-evaluation of these attitudes is slowly being achieved, at least in outline. Only a change in the economic role of woman, and her independent involvement in production, can and will bring about the weakening of these mistaken and hypocritical ideas.

The three basic circumstances distorting the modern psyche – extreme egoism, the idea that married partners possess each other, and the acceptance of the inequality of the sexes in terms of physical and emotional experience – must be faced if the sexual problem is to be settled. People will find the "magic key" with which they can break out of their situation only when their psyche has a sufficient store of "feelings of consideration", when their ability to love is greater, when the idea of freedom in personal relationships becomes fact, and when the principle of "comradeship" triumphs over the traditional idea of "inequality" and submission. The sexual problems cannot be solved without this radical re-education of our psyche.

But isn't this asking too much? Isn't the suggestion utopian, without foundation, the naïve notion of a dreaming idealist? How are you honestly going to raise mankind's "potential for loving"? Haven't wise men of all nations since time immemorial, beginning with Buddha and Confucius and ending with Christ, been busying themselves over this? And who can say if the "potential for loving" has been raised? Isn't this kind of well-meaning daydream about the solution of the sexual crisis simply a confession of weakness and a refusal to go on with the search for the "magic key"?

Is that the case? Is the radical re-education of our psyche and our approach to sexual relationships something so unlikely, so removed from reality? Couldn't one say that, on the contrary, while great social

and economic changes are in progress, the conditions are being created that demand and give rise to a new basis for psychological experience that is in line with what we have been talking about? Another class, a new social group, is coming forward to replace the bourgeoisie, with its bourgeois ideology, and its individualistic code of sexual morality. The progressive class, as it develops in strength, cannot fail to reveal new ideas about relationships between the sexes that form in close connection with the problems of its social class.

The complicated evolution of socio-economic relations taking place before our eyes, which changes all our ideas about the role of women in social life and undermines the sexual morality of the bourgeoisie, has two contradictory results. On the one hand we see mankind's tireless efforts to adapt to the new, changing socio-economic conditions. This is manifest either in an attempt to preserve the "old forms" while providing them with a new content (the observance of the external form of the indissoluble, strictly monogamous marriage with an acceptance, in practice, of the freedom of the partners) or in the acceptance of new forms which contain however all the elements of the moral code of bourgeois marriage (the "free" union where the compulsive possessiveness of the partners is greater than within legal marriage). On the other hand we see the slow but steady appearance of new forms of relationships between the sexes that differ from the old norms in outward form and in spirit.

Mankind is not groping its way toward these new ideas with much confidence, but we need to look at its attempt, however vague it is at the moment, since it is an attempt closely linked with the tasks of the proletariat as the class which is to capture the "beleaguered fortress" of the future. If, amongst the complicated labyrinth of contradictory and tangled sexual norms, you want to find the beginnings of more healthy relationships between the sexes – relationships that promise to lead humanity out of the sexual crisis – you have to leave the "cultured quarters" of the bourgeoisie with their refined individualistic psyche, and take a look at the huddled dwelling-places of the working class. There, amidst the horror and squalor of capitalism, amidst tears and curses, the springs of life are welling up.

You can see the double process which we have just mentioned working itself out in the lives of the proletariat, who have to exist under the pressure of harsh economic conditions, cruelly exploited by capitalism. You can see both the process of "passive adjustment" and that of active opposition to the existing reality. The destructive influence of capitalism destroys the basis of the worker's family and forces him unconsciously to "adapt" to the existing conditions. This gives rise to a

whole series of situations with regard to relationships between the sexes which are similar to those in other social classes. Under the pressure of low wages the worker inevitably tends to get married at a later age. If twenty years ago a worker usually got married between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, he now shoulders the cares of a family only towards his thirtieth year. The higher the cultural demands of the worker – the more he values the opportunity of being in contact with cultural life, of visiting theatres and lectures, of reading papers and magazines, of giving his spare time to struggle and politics or to some favourite pursuit such as art or reading etc. – the later he tends to get married. But physical needs won't take a financial situation into consideration: they insist on making themselves felt. The working-class bachelor, in the same way as the middle-class bachelor, looks to prostitution for an outlet. This is an example of the passive adjustment of the working class to the unfavourable conditions of their existence. Take another example. When the worker marries, the low level of pay forces the worker's family to "regulate" childbirth just as the bourgeois family does. The frequent cases of infanticide, the growth of prostitution – these are all expressions of the same process. These are all examples of adjustment by the working class to the surrounding reality. But this is not a process characteristic of the proletariat alone. All the other classes and sections of the population caught up in the world process of capitalist development react in this way.

We see a difference only when we begin to talk about the active, creative forces at work that oppose rather than adapt to the repressive reality, and about the new ideals and attempts at new relationships between the sexes. It is only within the working class that this active opposition is taking shape. This doesn't mean that the other classes and sections of the population (particularly the middle-class intelligentsia who, by the circumstances of their social existence, stand closest to the working class) don't adopt the "new" forms that are being worked out by the progressive working class. The bourgeoisie, motivated by an instinctive desire to breathe new life into their dead and feeble forms of marriage, seize upon the "new" ideas of the working class. But the ideals and code of sexual morality that the working class develops do not answer the class needs of the bourgeoisie. They reflect the demands of the working class and therefore serve as a new weapon in its social struggle. They help shatter the foundations of the social domination of the bourgeoisie. Let us make this point clear by an example.

The attempt by the middle-class intelligentsia to replace indissoluble marriage by the freer, more easily broken ties of civil marriage

destroys the essential basis of the social stability of the bourgeoisie. It destroys the monogamous, property-orientated family. On the other hand, a greater fluidity in relationships between the sexes coincides with and is even the indirect result of one of the basic tasks of the working class. The rejection of the element of "submission" in marriage is going to destroy the last artificial ties of the bourgeois family. This act of "submission" on the part of one member of the working class to another, in the same way as the sense of possessiveness in relationships, has a harmful effect on the proletarian psyche. It is not in the interests of that revolutionary class to elect only certain members as its independent representatives, whose duty it is to serve the class interests before the interests of the individual, isolated family. Conflicts between the interests of the family and the interests of the class which occur at the time of a strike or during an active struggle, and the moral yardstick with which the proletariat views such events, are sufficiently clear evidence of the basis of the new proletarian ideology.

Suppose family affairs require a businessman to take his capital out of a firm at a time when the enterprise is in financial difficulties. Bourgeois morality is clear-cut in its estimate of his action: "The interests of the family come first". We can compare with this the attitude of workers to a strikebreaker who defies his comrades and goes to work during a strike to save his family from being hungry. "The interests of the class come first". Here's another example. The love and loyalty of the middle-class husband to his family are sufficient to divert his wife from all interests outside the home and end up by tying her to the nursery and the kitchen. "The ideal husband can support the ideal family" is the way the bourgeoisie looks at it. But how do workers look upon a "conscious" member of their class who shuts the eyes of his wife or girl-friend to the social struggle? For the sake of individual happiness, for the sake of the family, the morality of the working class will demand that women take part in the life that is unfolding beyond the doorsteps. The "captivity" of women in the home, the way family interests are placed before all else, the widespread exercise of absolute property rights by the husband over the wife – all these things are being broken down by the basic principle of the working-class ideology of "comradely solidarity". The idea that some members are unequal and must submit to other members of one and the same class is in contradiction with the basic proletarian principle of comradeship. This principle of comradeship is basic to the ideology of the working class. It colours and determines the whole developing proletarian morality, a morality which helps to re-educate the personality of man, allowing him to be capable of

positive feeling, capable of freedom instead of being bound by a sense of property, capable of comradeship rather than inequality and submission.

It is an old truth that every new class that develops as a result of an advance in economic growth and material culture offers mankind an appropriately new ideology. The code of sexual behaviour is a part of this ideology. However it is worth saying something about "proletarian ethics" or "proletarian sexual morality", in order to criticise the well-worn idea that proletarian sexual morality is no more than "superstructure", and that there is no place for any change in this sphere until the economic base of society has been changed. As if the ideology of a certain class is formed only when the breakdown in the socio-economic relationships, guaranteeing the dominance of that class, has been completed! All the experience of history teaches us that a social group works out its ideology, and consequently its sexual morality, in the process of its struggle with hostile social forces.

Only with the help of new spiritual values, created within and answering the needs of the class, will that class manage to strengthen its social position. It can only successfully win power from those groups in society that are hostile to it by holding to these new norms and ideals. To search for the basic criteria for a morality that can reflect the specific interests of the working class, and to see that the developing sexual norms are in accordance with these criteria – this is the task that must be tackled by the ideologists of the working class. We have to understand that it is only by becoming aware of the creative process that is going on within society, and of the new demands, new ideals and new norms that are being formed, only by becoming clear about the basis of the sexual morality of the progressive class, that we can possibly make sense of the chaos and contradictions of sexual relationships and find the thread that will make it possible to undo the tightly rolled up tangle of sexual problems.

We must remember that only a code of sexual morality that is in harmony with the problems of the working class can serve as an important weapon in strengthening the working class's fighting position. The experience of history teaches us that much. What can stop us using this weapon in the interests of the working class, who are fighting for a communist system and for new relationships between the sexes that are deeper and more joyful?

Communism and the Family

Women's role in production: its effect upon the family

Will the family continue to exist under communism? Will the family remain in the same form? These questions are troubling many women of the working class and worrying their menfolk as well. Life is changing before our very eyes; old habits and customs are dying out, and the whole life of the proletarian family is developing in a way that is new and unfamiliar and, in the eyes of some, "bizarre". No wonder that working women are beginning to think these questions over. Another fact that invites attention is that divorce has been made easier in Soviet Russia. The decree of the Council of People's Commissars issued on 18 December 1917 means that divorce is no longer a luxury that only the rich can afford; henceforth, a working woman will not have to petition for months or even for years to secure the right to live separately from a husband who beats her and makes her life a misery with his drunkenness and uncouth behaviour. Divorce by mutual agreement now takes no more than a week or two to obtain. Women who are unhappy in their married life welcome this easy divorce. But others, particularly those who are used to looking upon their husband as "breadwinners", are frightened. They have not yet understood that a woman must accustom herself to seek and find support in the collective and in society, and not from the individual man.

There is no point in not facing up to the truth: the old family in which the man was everything and the woman nothing, the typical family where the woman had no will of her own, no time of her own and no money of her own, is changing before our very eyes. But there is no need for alarm. It is only our ignorance that leads us to think that the things we are used to can never change. Nothing could be less true than the saying "as it was, so it shall be". We have only to read how people lived in the past to see that everything is subject to change and that no customs, political organisations or moral principles are fixed and inviolable. In the course of history, the structure of the family has changed many times; it was once quite different from the family of today. There was a time when the kinship family was considered the norm: the mother headed a family consisting of her children, grand-children and great-grandchildren, who lived and worked together. At another period the patriarchal family was the rule. In this case it was

the father whose will was law for all the other members of the family; even today such families may be found among the peasantry in the Russian villages. Here the morals and customs of family life are not those of the urban proletariat. In the countryside, they observe norms which the worker has long forgotten. The structure of the family and the customs of family life also vary from nation to nation. Among some peoples such as the Turks, Arabs and Persians, a man is allowed to have several wives. There have been and there still are tribes where the woman may have several husbands. We are used to the fact that a young girl is expected to remain a virgin until marriage; however, there are tribes where it is a matter of pride to have had many lovers and where the women decorate their arms and legs with the corresponding number of bracelets. Many practices which might astonish us and which might even seem immoral are considered by other peoples to be quite normal and they, in their turn, consider our laws and customs "sinful". There is, therefore, no reason to be frightened of the fact that the family is in the process of change, and that outdated and unnecessary things are being discarded and new relations between men and women developing. Our job is to decide which aspects of our family system are outdated, and to determine what relations between the men and women of the working and peasant classes and which rights and duties would best harmonise with the conditions of life in the new workers' Russia. That which is in line with the new life should be maintained, while all that is old and outdated and derives from the cursed epoch of servitude and domination, of landed proprietors and capitalists, should be swept aside together with the exploiting class itself and the other enemies of the proletariat and the poor.

The type of family to which the urban and rural proletariat has grown accustomed is one of these legacies of the past. There was a time when the isolated, firmly-knit family, based on a church wedding, was equally necessary to all its members. If there had been no family, who would have fed, clothed and brought up the children? Who would have given them advice? In days gone by, to be an orphan was one of the worst fates imaginable. In the family of old, the husband earns and supports his wife and children. The wife for her part is occupied with housekeeping and with bringing up the children as best she can. But over the last hundred years this customary family structure has been falling apart in all the countries where capitalism is dominant, and where the number of factories and other enterprises which employ hired labour is increasing. The customs and moral principles of family life are changing as the general conditions of life change. It is the universal spread of

female labour that has contributed most of all to the radical change in family life. Formerly only the man was considered a breadwinner. But Russian women have for the past fifty or sixty years (and in other capitalist countries for a somewhat longer period of time) been forced to seek paid work outside the family and outside the home. The wages of the "breadwinner" being insufficient for the needs of the family, the woman found herself obliged to look for a wage and to knock at the factory door. With every year the number of working-class women starting work outside the home as day labourers, saleswomen, clerks, washerwomen and servants increased. Statistics show that in 1914, before the outbreak of the First World War, there were about sixty million women earning their own living in the countries of Europe and America, and during the war this number increased considerably. Almost half of these women are married. What kind of family life they must have can easily be imagined. What kind of "family life" can there be if the wife and mother is out at work for at least eight hours and, counting the travelling, is away from home for ten hours a day? Her home is neglected; the children grow up without any maternal care, spending most of the time out on the streets, exposed to all the dangers of this environment. The woman who is wife, mother and worker has to expend every ounce of energy to fulfil these roles. She has to work the same hours as her husband in some factory, printing-house or commercial establishment and then on top of that she has to find the time to attend to her household and look after her children. Capitalism has placed a crushing burden on woman's shoulders: it has made her a wage-worker without having reduced her cares as housekeeper or mother. Woman staggers beneath the weight of this triple load. She suffers, her face is always wet with tears. Life has never been easy for woman, but never has her lot been harder and more desperate than that of the millions of working women under the capitalist yoke in this heyday of factory production.

The family breaks down as more and more women go out to work. How can one talk about family life when the man and woman work different shifts, and where the wife does not even have the time to prepare a decent meal for her offspring? How can one talk of parents when the mother and father are out working all day and cannot find the time to spend even a few minutes with their children? It was quite different in the old days. The mother remained at home and occupied herself with her household duties; her children were at her side, under her watchful eye. Nowadays the working woman hastens out of the house early in the morning when the factory whistle blows. When evening comes and the whistle sounds again, she hurries home to scramble

through the most pressing of her domestic tasks. Then it's off to work again the next morning, and she is tired from lack of sleep. For the married working woman, life is as bad as the workhouse. It is not surprising therefore that family ties should loosen and the family begin to fall apart. The circumstances that held the family together no longer exist. *The family is ceasing to be necessary either to its members or to the nation as a whole.* The old family structure is now merely a hindrance. What used to make the old family so strong? First, because the husband and father was the family's breadwinner; secondly, because the family economy was necessary to all its members; and thirdly, because children were brought up by their parents. What is left of this former type of family? The husband, as we have just seen, has ceased to be the sole breadwinner. The wife who goes to work earns wages. She has learned to earn her own living, to support her children and not infrequently her husband. The family now only serves as the primary economic unit of society and the supporter and educator of young children. Let us examine the matter in more detail, to see whether or not the family is about to be relieved of these tasks as well.

Housework ceases to be necessary

There was a time when the women of the poorer classes in city and country spent their entire lives within the four walls of the home. A woman knew nothing beyond the threshold of her own home, and in most cases had no wish to know anything. After all, in her own home, there was so much to do, and this work was most necessary and useful not only for the family itself but also for the state as a whole. The woman did everything that the modern working and peasant woman has to do; but besides this cooking, washing, cleaning and mending, she spun wool and linen, wove cloth and garments, knitted stockings, made lace, prepared – as far as her resources permitted – all sorts of pickles, jams and other preserves for winter, and manufactured her own candles. It is difficult to make a complete list of all her duties. That is how our mothers and grandmothers lived. Even today you may still come across remote villages deep in the country, far from the railroads and the big rivers, where this mode of life has been preserved and where the mistress of the house is overburdened with all kinds of chores over which the working woman of the big cities and of the populous industrial regions has long ceased to worry.

In our grandmother's day, all this domestic work was necessary and beneficial; it ensured the well-being of the family. The more the mistress of the house applied herself, the better the peasant or crafts-

man's family lived. Even the national economy benefited from the housewife's activity, for the woman did not limit herself to making soup and cooking potatoes (i.e. satisfying the immediate needs of the family), she also produced such things as cloth, thread, butter, etc. which had a value as commodities that could be sold on the market. And every man, whether peasant or worker, tried to find a wife who had "hands of gold", for he knew that a family could not get along without this "domestic labour". The interests of the whole nation were involved, for the more work the woman and the other members of the family put into making cloth, leather and wool (the surplus of which was sold in the neighbouring market), the greater the economic prosperity of the country as a whole.

But capitalism has changed all this. All that was formerly produced in the bosom of the family is now being manufactured on a mass scale in workshops and factories. The machine has superseded the wife. What housekeeper would now bother to make candles, spin wool or weave cloth? All these products can be bought in the shop next door. Formerly every girl would learn to knit stockings. Nowadays, what working woman would think of making her own? In the first place she doesn't have the time. Time is money, and no one wants to waste time in an unproductive and useless manner. Few working women would start to pickle cucumbers or make other preserves when all these things can be bought in the shop. Even if the products sold in the store are of an inferior quality and not prepared with the care of the home-made equivalent, the working woman has neither the time nor the energy needed to perform these domestic operations. First and foremost she is a hired worker. Thus the family economy is gradually being deprived of all the domestic work without which our grandmothers could hardly have imagined a family. What was formerly produced in the family is now produced by the collective labour of working men and women in the factories.

The family no longer produces; it only consumes. The housework that remains consists of cleaning (cleaning the floors, dusting, heating water, care of the lamps etc.), cooking (preparation of dinners and suppers), washing and the care of the linen and clothing of the family (darning and mending). These are difficult and exhausting tasks and they absorb all the spare time and energy of the working woman who must, in addition, put in her hours at a factory. But this work is different in one important way from the work our grandmothers did: the four tasks enumerated above, which still serve to keep the family together, are of no value to the state and the national economy, for they

do not create any new values or make any contribution to the prosperity of the country. The housewife may spend all day, from morning to evening, cleaning her home, she may wash and iron the linen daily, make every effort to keep her clothing in good order and prepare whatever dishes she pleases and her modest resources allow, and she will still end the day without having created any values. Despite her industry she would not have made anything that could be considered a commodity. Even if a working woman were to live a thousand years, she would still have to begin every day from the beginning. There would always be a new layer of dust to be removed from the mantelpiece, her husband would always come in hungry and her children bring in mud on their shoes.

Women's work is becoming less useful to the community as a whole. It is becoming unproductive. The individual household is dying. It is giving way in our society to collective housekeeping. Instead of the working woman cleaning her flat, the communist society can arrange for men and women whose job it is to go round in the morning cleaning rooms. The wives of the rich have long since been freed from these irritating and tiring domestic duties. Why should working woman continue to be burdened with them? In Soviet Russia the working woman should be surrounded by the same ease and light, hygiene and beauty that previously only the very rich could afford. Instead of the working woman having to struggle with the cooking and spend her last free hours in the kitchen preparing dinner and supper, communist society will organise public restaurants and communal kitchens.

Even under capitalism such establishments have begun to appear. In fact over the last half a century the number of restaurants and cafés in all the great cities of Europe has been growing daily; they are springing up like mushrooms after the autumn rain. But under capitalism only people with well-lined purses can afford to take their meals in restaurants, while under communism everyone will be able to eat in the communal kitchens and dining-rooms. The working woman will not have to slave over the washtub any longer, or ruin her eyes in darning her stockings and mending her linen; she will simply take these things to the central laundries each week and collect the washed and ironed garments later. That will be another job less to do. Special clothes-mending centres will free the working woman from the hours spent on mending and give her the opportunity to devote her evenings to reading, attending meetings and concerts. Thus the four categories of housework are doomed to extinction with the victory of communism. And the working woman will

surely have no cause to regret this. Communism liberates woman from her domestic slavery and makes her life richer and happier.

The state is responsible for the upbringing of children

But even if housework disappears, you may argue, there are still the children to look after. But here too, the workers' state will come to replace the family; society will gradually take upon itself all the tasks that before the revolution fell to the individual parents. Even before the revolution, the instruction of the child had ceased to be the duty of the parents. Once the children had attained school age the parents could breathe more freely, for they were no longer responsible for the intellectual development of their offspring. But there were still plenty of obligations to fulfil. There was still the matter of feeding the children, buying them shoes and clothes and seeing that they developed into skilled and honest workers able, when the time came, to earn their own living and feed and support their parents in old age. Few workers' families, however, were able to fulfil these obligations. Their low wages did not enable them to give the children enough to eat, while lack of free time prevented them from devoting the necessary attention to the education of the rising generation. The family is supposed to bring up the children, but in reality proletarian children grow up on the streets. Our forefathers knew some family life, but the children of the proletariat know none. Furthermore, the parents' small income and the precarious position in which the family is placed financially often force the child to become an independent worker at scarcely ten years of age. And when children begin to earn their own money they consider themselves their own masters, and the words and counsels of the parents are no longer law; the authority of the parents weakens, and obedience is at an end.

Just as housework withers away, so the obligations of parents to their children wither away gradually until finally society assumes the full responsibility. Under capitalism children were frequently, too frequently, a heavy and unbearable burden on the proletarian family. Communist society will come to the aid of the parents. In Soviet Russia the Commissariats of Public Education and of Social Welfare are already doing much to assist the family. We already have homes for very small babies, creches, kindergartens, children's colonies and homes, hospitals and health resorts for sick children, restaurants, free lunches at school and free distribution of text books, warm clothing and shoes to schoolchildren. All this goes to show that the responsibility for the child is passing from the family to the collective.

The parental care of children in the family could be divided into

three parts: (a) the care of the very young baby, (b) the bringing up of the child, and (c) the instruction of the child. Even in capitalist society the education of the child in primary schools and later in secondary and higher educational establishments became the responsibility of the state. Even in capitalist society the needs of the workers were to some extent met by the provision of playgrounds, kindergartens, play groups, etc. The more the workers became conscious of their rights and the better they were organised, the more society had to relieve the family of the care of the children. But bourgeois society was afraid of going too far towards meeting the interests of the working class, lest this contribute to the break-up of the family. For the capitalists are well aware that the old type of family, where the woman is a slave and where the husband is responsible for the well-being of his wife and children, constitutes the best weapon in the struggle to stifle the desire of the working class for freedom and to weaken the revolutionary spirit of the working man and working woman. The worker is weighed down by his family cares and is obliged to compromise with capital. The father and mother are ready to agree to any terms when their children are hungry. Capitalist society has not been able to transform education into a truly social and state matter because the property owners, the bourgeoisie, have been against this.

Communist society considers the social education of the rising generation to be one of the fundamental aspects of the new life. The old family, narrow and petty, where the parents quarrel and are only interested in their own offspring, is not capable of educating the "new person". The playgrounds, gardens, homes and other amenities where the child will spend the greater part of the day under the supervision of qualified educators will, on the other hand, offer an environment in which the child can grow up a conscious communist who recognises the need for solidarity, comradeship, mutual help and loyalty to the collective. What responsibilities are left to the parents, when they no longer have to take charge of upbringing and education? The very small baby, you might answer, while it is still learning to walk and clinging to its mother's skirt, still needs her attention. Here again the communist state hastens to the aid of the working mother. No longer will there be any women who are alone. The workers' state aims to support every mother, married or unmarried, while she is suckling her child, and to establish maternity homes, day nurseries and other such facilities in every city and village, in order to give women the opportunity to combine work in society with maternity.

Working mothers have no need to be alarmed; communist

society is not intending to take children away from their parents or to tear the baby from the breast of its mother, and neither is it planning to take violent measures to destroy the family. No such thing! The aims of communist society are quite different. Communist society sees that the old type of family is breaking up, and that all the old pillars which supported the family as a social unit are being removed: the domestic economy is dying, and working-class parents are unable to take care of their children or provide them with sustenance and education. Parents and children suffer equally from this situation. Communist society has this to say to the working woman and working man: "You are young, you love each other. Everyone has the right to happiness. Therefore live your life. Do not flee happiness. Do not fear marriage, even though under capitalism marriage was truly a chain of sorrow. Do not be afraid of having children. Society needs more workers and rejoices at the birth of every child. You do not have to worry about the future of your child; your child will know neither hunger nor cold." Communist society takes care of every child and guarantees both him and his mother material and moral support. Society will feed, bring up and educate the child. At the same time, those parents who desire to participate in the education of their children will by no means be prevented from doing so. Communist society will take upon itself all the duties involved in the education of the child, but the joys of parenthood will not be taken away from those who are capable of appreciating them. Such are the plans of communist society and they can hardly be interpreted as the forcible destruction of the family and the forcible separation of child from mother.

There is no escaping the fact: the old type of family has had its day. The family is withering away not because it is being forcibly destroyed by the state, but because the family is ceasing to be a necessity. The state does not need the family, because the domestic economy is no longer profitable: the family distracts the worker from more useful and productive labour. The members of the family do not need the family either, because the task of bringing up the children which was formerly theirs is passing more and more into the hands of the collective. In place of the old relationship between men and women, a new one is developing: a union of affection and comradeship, a union of two equal members of communist society, both of them free, both of them independent and both of them workers. No more domestic bondage for women. No more inequality within the family. No need for women to fear being left without support and with children to bring up. The woman in communist society no longer depends upon her husband but on her work. It is not in her husband but in her capacity for work that she will

find support. She need have no anxiety about her children. The workers' state will assume responsibility for them. Marriage will lose all the elements of material calculation which cripple family life. Marriage will be a union of two persons who love and trust each other. Such a union promises to the working men and women who understand themselves and the world around them the most complete happiness and the maximum satisfaction. Instead of the conjugal slavery of the past, communist society offers women and men a free union which is strong in the comradeship which inspired it. Once the conditions of labour have been transformed and the material security of the working women has increased, and once marriage such as the church used to perform it – this so-called indissoluble marriage which was at bottom merely a fraud – has given place to the free and honest union of men and women who are lovers and comrades, prostitution will disappear. This evil, which is a stain on humanity and the scourge of hungry working women, has its roots in commodity production and the institution of private property. Once these economic forms are superseded, the trade in women will automatically disappear. The women of the working class, therefore, need not worry over the fact that the family is doomed to disappear. They should, on the contrary, welcome the dawn of a new society which will liberate women from domestic servitude, lighten the burden of motherhood and finally put an end to the terrible curse of prostitution.

The woman who takes up the struggle for the liberation of the working class must learn to understand that there is no more room for the old proprietary attitude which says: "These are my children, I owe them all my maternal solicitude and affection; those are your children, they are no concern of mine and I don't care if they go hungry and cold – I have no time for other children." The worker-mother must learn not to differentiate between yours and mine; she must remember that there are only our children, the children of Russia's communist workers.

The workers' state needs new relations between the sexes. Just as the narrow and exclusive affection of the mother for her own children must expand until it extends to all the children of the great proletarian family, the indissoluble marriage based on the servitude of women is replaced by a free union of two equal members of the workers' state who are united by love and mutual respect. In place of the individual and egoistic family, a great universal family of workers will develop, in which all the workers, men and women, will above all be comrades. This is what relations between men and women in the communist society will be like. These new relations will ensure for humanity all the joys of a love unknown in the commercial society of

capitalism, a love that is free and based on the true social equality of happy young people, free in their feelings and affections. In the name of

Communist society wants bright, healthy children and strong, the partners.

equality, liberty and the comradely love of the new marriage we call upon the working and peasant men and women, to apply themselves courageously and with faith to the work of rebuilding human society, in order to render it more perfect, more just and more capable of ensuring the individual the happiness which he or she deserves. The red flag of the social revolution which flies above Russia and is now being hoisted aloft in other countries of the world proclaims the approach of the heaven on earth to which humanity has been aspiring for centuries.

Prostitution and ways of fighting it*

Comrades, the question of prostitution is a difficult and thorny subject that has received too little attention in Soviet Russia. This sinister legacy of our bourgeois capitalist past continues to poison the atmosphere of the workers' republic and affects the physical and moral health of the working people of Soviet Russia. It is true that in the three years of the revolution the nature of prostitution has, under the pressure of the changing economic and social conditions, altered somewhat. But we are still far from being rid of this evil. Prostitution continues to exist and threatens the feeling of solidarity and comradeship between working men and women, the members of the workers' republic. And this feeling is the foundation and the basis of the communist society we are building and making a reality. It is time that we faced up to this problem. It is time that we gave thought and attention to the reasons behind prostitution. It is time that we found ways and means of ridding ourselves once and for all of this evil, which has no place in a workers' republic.

Our workers' republic has so far passed no laws directed at the elimination of prostitution, and has not even issued a clear and scientific formulation of the view that prostitution is something that injures the collective. We know that prostitution is an evil, we even acknowledge that at the moment, in this transitional period with its many problems, prostitution has become extremely widespread. But we have brushed the issue aside, we have been silent about it. Partly this is because of the hypocritical attitudes we have inherited from the bourgeoisie, and partly it is because of our reluctance to consider and come to terms with the harm which the widespread mass scale of prostitution does to the work collective. And our lack of enthusiasm in the struggle against prostitution has been reflected in our legislation.

We have so far passed no statutes recognising prostitution as a harmful social phenomenon. When the old tsarist laws were revoked by the Council of People's Commissars, all the statutes concerning prostitution were abolished. But no new measures based on the interests of the work collective were introduced. Thus the politics of the Soviet authorities towards prostitutes and prostitution has been characterised

* Speech to the third all-Russian conference of heads of the Regional Women's Departments, 1921.

by diversity and contradictions. In some areas the police still help to round up prostitutes just as in the old days. In other places, brothels exist quite openly. (The Interdepartmental Commission on the Struggle against Prostitution has data on this.) And there are yet other areas where prostitutes are considered criminals and thrown into forced labour camps. The different attitudes of the local authorities thus highlight the absence of a clearly worded statute. Our vague attitude to this complex social phenomenon is responsible for a number of distortions of and diversions from the principles underlying our legislation and morality.

We must therefore not only confront the problem of prostitution but seek a solution that is in line with our basic principles and the programme of social and economic change adhered to by the party of the communists. We must, above all, clearly define what prostitution is. Prostitution is a phenomenon which is closely linked with unearned income, and it thrives in the epoch dominated by capital and private property. Prostitutes, from our point of view, are those women who sell their bodies for material benefit – for decent food, for clothes and other advantages; prostitutes are all those who avoid the necessity of working by giving themselves to a man, either on a temporary basis or for life.

Our Soviet workers' republic has inherited prostitution from the bourgeois capitalist past, when only a small number of women were involved in work within the national economy and the majority relied on the "male breadwinner", on the father or the husband. Prostitution arose with the first states as the inevitable shadow of the official institution of marriage, which was designed to preserve the rights of private property and to guarantee property inheritance through a line of lawful heirs. The institution of marriage made it possible to prevent the wealth that had been accumulated from being scattered amongst a vast number of "heirs". But there is a great difference between the prostitution of Greece and Rome and the prostitution we know today. In ancient times the number of prostitutes was small, and there was not that hypocrisy which colours the morality of the bourgeois world and compels bourgeois society to raise its hat respectfully to the "lawful wife" of an industrial magnate who has obviously sold herself to a husband she does not love, and to turn away in disgust from a girl forced into the streets by poverty, homelessness, unemployment and other social circumstances which derive from the existence of capitalism and private property. The ancient world regarded prostitution as the *legal* complement to exclusive family relationships. Aspasia [the mistress of Pericles] was respected by her contemporaries far more than the colourless wives of the breeding apparatus.

In the Middle Ages, when artisan production predominated, prostitution was accepted as something natural and lawful. Prostitutes had their own guilds and took part in festivals and local events just like the other guilds. The prostitute guaranteed that the daughters of the respectable citizens remained chaste and their wives faithful, since single men could (for a consideration) turn to the members of the guild for comfort. Prostitution was thus to the advantage of the worthy propertied citizens and was openly accepted by them.

With the rise of capitalism, the picture changes. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries prostitution assumes threatening proportions for the first time. The sale of women's labour, which is closely and inseparably connected with the sale of the female body, steadily increases, leading to a situation where the respected wife of a worker, and not just the abandoned and "dishonoured" girl, joins the ranks of the prostitutes: a mother for the sake of her children, or a young girl like Sonya Marmeladova for the sake of her family. This is the horror and hopelessness that results from the exploitation of labour by capital. When a woman's wages are insufficient to keep her alive, the sale of favours seems a possible subsidiary occupation. The hypocritical morality of bourgeois society encourages prostitution by the structure of its exploitative economy, while at the same time mercilessly covering with contempt any girl or woman who is forced to take this path.

The black shadow of prostitution stalks the legal marriage of bourgeois society. History has never before witnessed such a growth of prostitution as occurred in the last part of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. In Berlin there is one prostitute for every twenty so-called honest women. In Paris the ratio is one to eighteen and in London one to nine. There are different types of prostitution: there is open prostitution that is legal and subject to regulation, and there is the secret, "seasonal" type. All forms of prostitution flourish like a poisonous flower in the swamps of the bourgeois way of life.

The world of the bourgeoisie does not even spare children, forcing young girls of nine and ten into the sordid embraces of wealthy and depraved old men. In the capitalist countries there are brothels which specialise exclusively in very young girls. In this present post-war period every woman faces the possibility of unemployment. Unemployment hits women in particular, and causes an enormous increase in the army of "street women". Hungry crowds of women seeking out the buyers of "white slaves" flood the evening streets of Berlin, Paris and the other civilised centres of the capitalist states. The trade in women's flesh is conducted quite openly, which is not surprising when you con-

sider that the whole bourgeois way of life is based on buying and selling. There is an undeniable element of material and economic consideration in even the most legal of marriages. Prostitution is the way out for the woman who fails to find herself a permanent breadwinner. Prostitution, under capitalism, provides men with the opportunity of having sexual relationships without having to take upon themselves the responsibility of caring materially for the women until the grave.

But if prostitution has such a hold and is so widespread even in Russia, how are we to struggle against it? In order to answer this question we must first analyse in more detail the factors giving rise to prostitution. Bourgeois science and its academics love to prove to the world that prostitution is a pathological phenomenon, i.e. that it is the result of the abnormalities of certain women. Just as some people are criminal by nature, some women, it is argued, are prostitutes by nature. Regardless of where or how such women might have lived, they would have turned to a life of sin. Marxists and the more conscientious scholars, doctors and statisticians have shown clearly that the idea of "inborn disposition" is false. Prostitution is above all a *social phenomenon*; it is closely connected to the needy position of woman and her economic dependence on man in marriage and the family. The roots of prostitution are in economics. Woman is on the one hand placed in an economically vulnerable position, and on the other hand has been conditioned by centuries of education to expect material favours from a man in return for sexual favours – whether these are given within or outside the marriage tie. This is the root of the problem. Here is the reason for prostitution.

If the bourgeois academics of the Lombroso-Tarnovsky school were correct in maintaining that prostitutes are born with the marks of corruption and sexual abnormality, how would one explain the well-known fact that in a time of crisis and unemployment the number of prostitutes immediately increases? How would one explain the fact that the purveyors of "living merchandise" who travelled to tsarist Russia from the other countries of western Europe always found a rich harvest in areas where crops had failed and the population was suffering from famine, whereas they came away with few recruits from areas of plenty? Why do so many of the women who are allegedly doomed by nature to ruin only take to prostitution in years of hunger and unemployment?

It is also significant that in the capitalist countries prostitution recruits its servants from the propertyless sections of the population. Low-paid work, homelessness, acute poverty and the need to support younger brothers and sisters: these are the factors that produce the

largest percentage of prostitutes. If the bourgeois theories about the corrupt and criminal disposition were true, then all classes of the population ought to contribute equally to prostitution. There ought to be the same proportion of corrupt women among the rich as among the poor. But professional prostitutes, women who live by their bodies, are with rare exceptions recruited from the poorer classes. Poverty, hunger, deprivation and the glaring social inequalities that are the basis of the bourgeois system drive these women to prostitution.

Or again one might point to the fact that prostitutes in the capitalist countries are drawn, according to the statistics, from the thirteen to twenty-three age-group. Children and young women, in other words. And the majority of these girls are alone and without a home. Girls from wealthy backgrounds who have the excellent bourgeois family to protect them turn to prostitution only very occasionally. The exceptions are usually victims of tragic circumstances. More often than not they are victims of the hypocritical "double morality". The bourgeois family abandons the girl who has "sinned" and she – alone, without support and branded by the scorn of society – sees prostitution as the only way out.

We can therefore list as factors responsible for prostitution: low wages, social inequalities, the economic dependence of women upon men, and the unhealthy custom by which women expect to be supported in return for sexual favours instead of in return for their labour.

The workers' revolution in Russia has shattered the basis of capitalism and has struck a blow at the former dependence of women upon men. All citizens are equal before the work collective. They are equally obliged to work for the common good and are equally eligible to the support of the collective when they need it. A woman provides for herself not by marriage but by the part she plays in production and the contribution she makes to the people's wealth.

Relations between the sexes are being transformed. But we are still bound by the old ideas. Furthermore, the economic structure is far from being completely re-arranged in the new way, and communism is still a long way off. In this transitional period prostitution naturally enough keeps a strong hold. After all, even though the main sources of prostitution – private property and the policy of strengthening the family – have been eliminated, other factors are still in force. Homelessness, neglect, bad housing conditions, loneliness and low wages for women are still with us. Our productive apparatus is still in a state of collapse, and the dislocation of the national economy continues. These and other economic and social conditions lead women to prostitute their bodies.

To struggle against prostitution chiefly means to struggle against these conditions – in other words, it means to support the general policy of the Soviet government, which is directed towards strengthening the basis of communism and the organisation of production.

Some people might say that since prostitution will have no place once the power of the workers and the basis of communism are strengthened, no special campaign is necessary. This type of argument fails to take into account the harmful and disuniting effect that prostitution has on the construction of a new communist society.

The correct slogan was formulated at the first All-Russian Congress of Peasant and Working Woman: "A woman of the Soviet labour republic is a free citizen with equal rights, and cannot and must not be the object of buying and selling." The slogan was proclaimed, but nothing was done. Above all, prostitution harms the national economy and hinders the further development of the productive forces. We know that we can only overcome chaos and improve industry if we harness the efforts and energies of the workers and if we organise the available labour power of both men and women in the most rational way. Down with the unproductive labour of housework and childminding! Make way for work that is organised and productive and serves the work collective! These are the slogans we must take up.

And what, after all, is the professional prostitute? She is a person whose energy is not used for the collective; a person who lives off others, by taking from the rations of others. Can this sort of thing be allowed in a workers' republic? No, it cannot. It cannot be allowed, because it reduces the reserves of energy and the number of working hands that are creating the national wealth and the general welfare. From the point of view of the national economy the professional prostitute is a labour deserter. For this reason we must ruthlessly oppose prostitution. In the interests of the economy we must start an immediate fight to reduce the number of prostitutes and eliminate prostitution in all its forms.

It is time we understood that the existence of prostitution contradicts the basic principles of a workers' republic which fights all forms of unearned wages. In the three years of the revolution our ideas on this subject have changed greatly. A new philosophy, which has little in common with the old ideas, is in the making. Three years ago we regarded a merchant as a completely respectable person. Provided his accounts were in order and he did not cheat or dupe his customer too obviously, he was rewarded with the title of "merchant of the first guild", "respected citizen", etc.

Since the revolution attitudes to trade and merchants have changed radically. We now call the "honest merchant" a speculator, and instead of awarding him honorary titles we drag him before a special committee and put him in a forced labour camp. Why do we do this? Because we know that we can only build a new communist economy if all adult citizens are involved in *productive labour*. The person who does not work and who lives off someone else or on an unearned wage harms the collective and the republic. We, therefore, hunt down the speculators, the traders and the hoarders who all live off unearned income. We must fight prostitution as another form of labour desertion.

We do not, therefore, condemn prostitution and fight against it as a special category but as an aspect of labour desertion. To us in the workers' republic it is not important whether a woman sells herself to one man or to many, whether she is classed as a professional prostitute selling her favours to a succession of clients or as a wife selling herself to her husband. All women who avoid work and do not take part in production or in caring for children are liable, on the same basis as prostitutes, to be forced to work. We cannot make a difference between a prostitute and a lawful wife kept by her husband, whoever her husband is – even if he is a "commissar". It is failure to take part in productive work that is the common thread connecting all labour deserters. The workers' collective condemns the prostitute not because she gives her body to many men but because, like the legal wife who stays at home, she does no useful work for the society.

The second reason for organising a deliberate and well-planned campaign against prostitution is in order to safeguard the people's health. Soviet Russia does not want illness and disease to cripple and weaken its citizens and reduce their work capacity. And prostitution spreads venereal disease. Of course, it is not the only means by which the disease is transmitted. Crowded living conditions, the absence of standards of hygiene, communal crockery and towels also play a part. Furthermore, in this time of changing moral norms and particularly when there is also a continual movement of troops from place to place, a sharp rise in the number of cases of venereal disease occurs independently of commercial prostitution. The civil war, for example, is raging in the fertile southern regions. The Cossack men have been beaten and have retreated with the Whites. Only the women are left behind in the villages. They have plenty of everything except husbands. The Red Army troops enter the village They are billeted out and stay several weeks. Free relationships develop between the soldiers and the women. These relationships have nothing to do with prostitution: the woman goes

with the man voluntarily because she is attracted to him, and there is no thought on her part of material gain. It is not the Red Army soldier who provides for the woman but rather the opposite. The woman looks after him for the period that the troops are quartered in the village. The troops move away, but they leave venereal disease behind. Infection spreads. The diseases develop, multiply, and threaten to maim the younger generation.

At a joint meeting of the department of maternity protection and the women's department, Professor Kol'tsov spoke about eugenics, the science of maintaining and improving the health of humanity. Prostitution is closely connected with this problem, since it is one of the main ways in which infections are spread. The theses of the interdepartmental commission on the struggle against prostitution point out that the development of special measures to fight venereal diseases is an urgent task. Steps must of course be taken to deal with all sources of the diseases, and not solely with prostitution in the way that hypocritical bourgeois society does. But although the diseases are spread to some extent by everyday circumstances, it is nevertheless essential to give everyone a clear idea of the role prostitution plays. The correct organisation of sexual education for young people is especially important. We must arm young people with accurate information allowing them to enter life with their eyes open. We must not remain silent any longer over questions connected with sexual life; we must break with false and bigoted bourgeois morality.

Prostitution is not compatible with the Soviet workers' republic for a third reason: it does not contribute to the development and strengthening of the basic class character and of the proletariat and its new morality.

What is the fundamental quality of the working class? What is its strongest moral weapon in the struggle? Solidarity and comradeship is the basis of communism. Unless this sense is strongly developed amongst working people, the building of a truly communist society is inconceivable. Politically conscious communists should therefore logically be encouraging the development of solidarity in every way and fighting against all that hinders its development. Prostitution destroys the equality, solidarity and comradeship of the two halves of the working class. A man who buys the favours of a woman does not see her as a comrade or as a person with equal rights. He sees the woman as dependent upon himself and as an unequal creature of a lower order who is of less worth to the workers' state. The contempt he has for the prostitute, whose favours he has bought, affects his attitude to all

women. The further development of prostitution, instead of allowing for the growth of comradely feeling and solidarity, strengthens the inequality of the relationships between the sexes.

Prostitution is alien and harmful to the new communist morality which is in the process of forming. The task of the party as a whole and of the women's departments in particular must be to launch a broad and resolute campaign against this legacy from the past. In bourgeois capitalist society all attempts at fighting prostitution were a useless waste of energy, since the two circumstances which gave rise to the phenomenon – private property and the direct material dependence of the majority of women upon men – were firmly established. In a workers' republic the situation has changed. Private property has been abolished and all citizens of the republic are obliged to work. Marriage has ceased to be a method by which a woman can find herself a "breadwinner" and thus avoid the necessity of working or providing for herself by her own labour. The major social factors giving rise to prostitution are, in Soviet Russia, being eliminated. A number of secondary economic and social reasons remain with which it is easier to come to terms. The women's departments must approach the struggle energetically, and they will find a wide field for activity.

On the Central Department's initiative, an interdepartmental commission for the struggle against prostitution was organised last year. For a number of reasons the work of the commission was neglected for a time, but since the autumn of this year there have been signs of life, and with the co-operation of Dr Gol'man and the Central (Women's) Department some work has been planned and organised. Representatives from the People's Commissariats of health, labour, social security and industry, the women's department and the union of communist youth are all involved. The commission has printed the theses in bulletin no. 4, distributes circulars to all regional departments of social security outlining a plan to establish similar commissions all over the country, and has set about working out a number of concrete measures to tackle the circumstances which give rise to prostitution.

The interdepartmental commission considers it necessary that the women's departments take an active part in this work, since prostitution affects the propertyless women of the working class. It is our job – it is the job of the women's departments – to organise a mass campaign around the question of prostitution. We must approach this issue with the interests of the work collective in mind and ensure that the revolution within the family is completed, and that relationships between the sexes are put on a more human footing.

The interdepartmental commission, as the theses make clear, takes the view that the struggle against prostitution is connected in a fundamental way with the realisation of our Soviet politics in the sphere of economics and general construction. Prostitution will be finally eliminated when the basis of communism is strengthened. This is the truth which determines our actions. But we also need to understand the importance of creating a communist morality. The two tasks are closely connected: the new morality is created by a new economy, but we will not build a new communist economy without the support of a new morality. Clarity and precise thinking are essential in this matter, and we have nothing to fear from the truth. Communists must openly accept that unprecedented changes in the nature of sexual relationships are taking place. This revolution is called into being by the change in the economic structure and by the new role which women play in the productive activity of the workers' state. In this difficult transition period, when the old is being destroyed and the new is in the process of being created, relations between the sexes sometimes develop that are not compatible with the interests of the collective. But there is also something healthy in the variety of relationships practised.

Our party and the women's departments in particular must analyse the different forms in order to ascertain which are compatible with the general tasks of the revolutionary class and serve to strengthen the collective and its interests. Behaviour that is harmful to the collective must be rejected and condemned by communists. This is how the Central Women's Department has understood the task of the interdepartmental commission. It is not only necessary to take practical measures to fight the situation and the circumstances that nourish prostitution and to solve the problems of housing and loneliness etc., but also to help the working class to establish its morality alongside its dictatorship.

The interdepartmental commission points to the fact that in Soviet Russia prostitution is practised (a) as a profession and (b) as a means of earning supplementary income. The first form of prostitution is less common and in Petrograd, for example, the number of prostitutes has not been significantly reduced by round-ups of the professionals. The second type of prostitution is widespread in bourgeois capitalist countries (in Petrograd, before the revolution, out of a total of fifty thousand prostitutes only about six or seven thousand were registered), and continues under various guises in our Russia. Soviet ladies exchange their favours for a pair of high-heeled boots; working women and mothers of families sell their favours for flour. Peasant women sleep with the heads of the anti-profiteer detachments in the hope of saving

their hoarded food, and office workers sleep with their bosses in return for rations, shoes and in the hope of promotion.

How should we fight this situation? The interdepartmental commission had to tackle the important question of *whether or not prostitution should be made a criminal offence*. Many of the representatives of the commission were inclined to the view that prostitution should be an offence, arguing that professional prostitutes are clearly labour deserters. If such a law were passed, the round-up and placing of prostitutes in forced labour camps would become accepted policy.

The Central Department spoke in firm and absolute opposition to such a step, pointing out that if prostitutes were to be arrested on such grounds, then so ought all legal wives who are maintained by their husbands and do not contribute to society. The prostitute and the housewife are both labour deserters, and you cannot send one to a forced labour camp without sending the other. This was the position the Central Department took, and it was supported by the representative of the Commissariat of Justice. If we take labour desertion as our criterion, we cannot help punishing all forms of labour desertion. Marriage or the existence of certain relationships between the sexes is of no significance and can play no role in defining criminal offences in a labour republic.

In bourgeois society a woman is condemned to persecution not when she does no work that is useful to the collective or because she sells herself for material gain (two-thirds of women in bourgeois society sell themselves to their legal husbands), but when her sexual relationships are informal and of short duration. Marriage in bourgeois society is characterised *by its duration and by the official nature of its registration*. Property inheritance is preserved in this way. Relationships that are of a temporary nature and lack official sanction are considered by the bigots and hypocritical upholders of bourgeois morality to be shameful.

Can we who uphold the interests of working people define relationships that are temporary and unregistered as criminal? Of course we cannot. Freedom in relationships between the sexes does not contradict communist ideology. The interests of the work collective are not affected by the temporary or lasting nature of a relationship or by its basis in love, passion or passing physical attraction.

A relationship is harmful and alien to the collective only *if material bargaining between the sexes is involved*, only *when worldly calculations* are a substitute for mutual attraction. Whether the bargaining takes the form of prostitution or of a legal marriage relationship is not important. Such unhealthy relationships cannot be permitted, since they threaten equality and solidarity. We must therefore condemn all

forms of prostitution, and go as far as explaining to those legal wives who are "kept women" what a sad and intolerable part they are playing in the worker's state.

Can the presence or otherwise of material bargaining be used as a criterion in determining what is and what is not a criminal offence? Can we really persuade a couple to admit whether or not there is an element of calculation in their relationship? Would such a law be workable, particularly in view of the fact that at the present time a great variety of relationships are practised among working people and ideas on sexual morality are in constant flux? Where does prostitution end and the marriage of convenience begin? The interdepartmental commission opposed the suggestion that prostitutes be punished for prostituting, i.e. for buying and selling. They confined themselves to suggesting that all people convicted of work desertion be directed to the social security network and from there either to the section of the Commissariat that deals with the deployment of the labour force or to sanatoria and hospitals. A prostitute is not a special case; as with other categories of deserter, she is only sent to do forced labour if she repeatedly avoids work. Prostitutes are not treated any differently from other labour deserters. This is an important and courageous step, worthy of the world's first labour republic.

The question of prostitution as an offence was set out in thesis no. 15. The next problem that had to be tackled was whether or not the law should punish the prostitute's clients. There were some on the commission who were in favour of this, but they had to give up the idea, which did not follow on logically from our basic premises. How is a client to be defined? Is he someone who buys a woman's favours? In that case the husbands of many legal wives will be guilty. Who is to decide who is a client and who is not? It was suggested that this problem be studied further before a decision was made, but the Central Department and the majority of the commission were against this. As the representative of the Commissariat of Justice admitted, if it were not possible to define exactly when a crime had been committed, then the idea of punishing clients was untenable. The position of the Central Department was once again adopted.

But while the commission accepted that clients cannot be punished by the law, it spoke out for the moral condemnation of those who visit prostitutes or in any way make a business out of prostitution. In fact the commission's theses point out that all go-betweens who make money out of prostitution can be prosecuted as persons making money other than by their own labour. Legislative proposals to this effect

have been drawn up by the interdepartmental commission and put before the Council of People's Commissars. They will come into force in the near future.

It remains for me to indicate the purely practical measures which can help to reduce prostitution, and in the implementation of which the women's departments can play an active role. It cannot be doubted that the poor and inadequate wages that women receive continue to serve as one of the real factors pushing women into prostitution. According to the law the wages of male and female workers are equal, but in practice most women are engaged in unskilled work. The problem of improving their skills through the development of a network of special courses must be tackled. The task of the women's departments must be to bring influence to bear on the education authorities to step up the provision of vocational training for working women.

The political backwardness of women and their lack of social awareness is a second reason for prostitution. The women's departments should increase their work amongst proletarian women. The best way to fight prostitution is to raise the political consciousness of the broad masses of women and to draw them into the revolutionary struggle to build communism.

The fact that the housing situation is still not solved also encourages prostitution. The women's department and the commission for the struggle against prostitution can and must have their say over the solution of this problem. The interdepartmental commission is working out a project on the provision of house communes for young working people and on the establishment of houses that will provide accommodation for women when they are newly arrived in any area. However, unless the women's departments and the komsomols in the provinces show some initiative and take independent action in this matter, all the directives of the commission will remain beautiful and benevolent resolutions – but they will remain on paper. And there is so much we can and must do. The local women's departments must work in conjunction with the education commissions to raise the issue of the correct organisation of sex education in schools. They could also hold a series of discussions and lectures on marriage, the family and the history of relationships between the sexes, highlighting the dependence of these phenomena and of sexual morality itself on economic factors.

It is time we were clear on the question of sexual relationships. It is time we approached this question in a spirit of ruthless and scientific criticism. I already said that the interdepartmental commission has accepted that professional prostitutes are to be treated in the same way

as labour deserters. It therefore follows that women who have a work-book but are practising prostitution as a secondary source of income cannot be prosecuted. But this does not mean that we do not fight against prostitution. We are aware, as I have already pointed out more than once today, that prostitution harms the work collective, negatively affecting the psychology of men and women and distorting feelings of equality and solidarity. Our task is to re-educate the work collective and to bring its psychology into line with the economic tasks of the working class. We must ruthlessly discard the old ideas and attitudes to which we cling through habit. Economics has outstripped ideology. The old economic structure is disintegrating and with it the old type of marriage, but we cling to bourgeois life styles. We are ready to reject all the aspects of the old system and welcome the revolution in all spheres of life, only . . . don't touch the family, don't try to change the family! Even politically aware communists are afraid to look squarely at the truth; they brush aside the evidence which clearly shows that the old family ties are weakening and that new forms of economy dictate new forms of relationships between the sexes. Soviet power recognises that woman has a part to play in the national economy and has placed her on an equal footing with the man in this respect, but in everyday life we still hold to the "old ways" and are prepared to accept as normal marriages which are based on the material dependency of a woman on a man. In our struggle against prostitution we must clarify our attitude to marital relations that are based on the same principles of "buying and selling". We must learn to be ruthless over this issue; we must not be deflected from our purpose by sentimental complaints that "by your criticism and scientific preaching you encroach on sacred family ties". We have to explain unequivocally that the old form of the family has been outstripped. Communist society has no need of it. The bourgeois world gave its blessing to the exclusiveness and isolation of the married couple from the collective; in the atomised and individualistic bourgeois society, the family was the only protection from the storm of life, a quiet harbour in a sea of hostility and competition. The family was an independent and enclosed collective. In communist society this cannot be. Communist society presupposes such a strong sense of the collective that any possibility of the existence of the isolated, introspective family group is excluded. At the present moment ties of kinship, family and even of married life can be seen to be weakening. New ties between working people are being forged and comradeship, common interests, collective responsibility and faith in the collective are establishing themselves as the highest principles of morality.

I will not take it upon myself to prophesy the form that marriage or relationships between the sexes will assume in the future. But of one thing there is no doubt: under communism all dependence of women upon men and all the elements of material calculation found in modern marriage will be absent. Sexual relationships will be based on a healthy instinct for reproduction prompted by the abandon of young love, or by fervent passion, or by a blaze of physical attraction or by a soft light of intellectual and emotional harmony. Such sexual relationships have nothing in common with prostitution. Prostitution is terrible because it is an act of violence by the woman upon herself in the name of material gain. Prostitution is a naked act of material calculation which leaves no room for considerations of love and passion. Where passion and attraction begin, prostitution ends. Under communism, prostitution and the contemporary family will disappear. Healthy, joyful and free relationships between the sexes will develop. A new generation will come into being, independent and courageous and with a strong sense of the collective: a generation which places the good of the collective above all else.

Comrades! We are laying the foundations for this communist future. It is in our power to hasten the advent of this future. We must strengthen the sense of solidarity within the working class. We must encourage this sense of togetherness. Prostitution hinders the development of solidarity, and we therefore call upon the women's departments to begin an immediate campaign to root out his evil.

Comrades! Our task is to cut out the roots that feed prostitution. Our task is to wage a merciless struggle against all the remnants of individualism and of the former type of marriage. Our task is to revolutionise attitudes in the sphere of sexual relationships, to bring them into line with the interest of the working collective. When the communist collective has eliminated the contemporary forms of marriage and the family, the problem of prostitution will cease to exist.

Let us get to work, comrades. The new family is already in the process of creation, and the great family of the triumphant world proletariat is developing and growing stronger.

Make way for Winged Eros: A Letter to Working Youth

Love as a socio-psychological factor

You ask me, my young friend, what place proletarian ideology gives to love? You are concerned by the fact that at the present time young workers are occupied more with love and related questions than with the tremendous tasks of construction which face the workers' republic. It is difficult for me to judge events from a distance, but let us try to find an explanation for this situation, and then it will be easier to answer the first question about the place of love in proletarian ideology.

There can be no doubt that Soviet Russia has entered a new phase of the civil war. The main theatre of struggle is now the front where the two ideologies, the two cultures – the bourgeois and the proletarian – do battle. The incompatibility of these two ideologies is becoming increasingly obvious, and the contradictions between these two fundamentally different cultures are growing more acute. Alongside the victory of communist principles and ideals in the sphere of politics and economics, a revolution in the outlook, emotions and the inner world of working people is inevitably taking place. A new attitude to life, society, work, art and to the rules of living (i.e. morality) can already be observed. The arrangement of sexual relationships is one aspect of these rules of living. Over the five years of the existence of our labour republic, the revolution on this non-military front has been accomplishing a great shift in the way men and women think. The fiercer the battle between the two ideologies, the greater the significance it assumes and the more inevitably it raises new "riddles of life" and new problems to which only the ideology of the working class can give a satisfactory answer.

The "riddle of love" that interests us here is one such problem. This question of the relationships between the sexes is a mystery as old as human society itself. At different levels of historical development mankind has approached the solution of this problem in different ways. The problem remains the same; the keys to its solution change. The keys are fashioned by the different epochs, by the classes in power and by the "spirit" of a particular age (in other words by its culture).

In Russia over the recent years of intense civil war and general dislocation there has been little interest in the nature of the riddle. The

men and women of the working classes were in the grip of other emotions, passions and experiences. In those years everyone walked in the shadow of death, and it was being decided whether victory would belong to the revolution and progress or to counter-revolution and reaction. In face of the revolutionary threat, tender-winged Eros fled from the surface of life. There was neither time nor a surplus of inner strength for love's "joys and pains". Such is the law of the preservation of humanity's social and psychological energy. As a whole, this energy is always directed to the most urgent aims of the historical moment. And in Russia, for a time, the biological instinct of reproduction, the natural voice of nature dominated the situation. Men and women came together and men and women parted much more easily and much more simply than before. They came together without great commitment and parted without tears or regret.

Prostitution disappeared, and the number of sexual relationships where the partners were under no obligation to each other and which were based on the instinct of reproduction unadorned by any emotions of love increased. This fact frightened some. But such a development was, in those years, inevitable. Either pre-existing relationships continued to exist and unite men and women through comradeship and long-standing friendship, which was rendered more precious by the seriousness of the moment, or new relationships were begun for the satisfaction of purely biological needs, both partners treating the affair as incidental and avoiding any commitment that might hinder their work for the revolution.

The unadorned sexual drive is easily aroused but is soon spent; thus "wingless Eros" consumes less inner strength than "winged Eros", whose love is woven of delicate strands of every kind of emotion. "Wingless Eros" does not make one suffer from sleepless nights, does not sap one's will, and does not entangle the rational workings of the mind. The fighting class could not have fallen under the power of "winged Eros" at a time when the clarion call of revolution was sounding. It would not have been expedient at such a time to waste the inner strength of the members of the collective on experiences that did not directly serve the revolution. Individual sex love, which lies at the heart of the pair marriage, demands a great expenditure of inner energy. The working class was interested not only in economising in terms of material wealth but also in preserving the intellectual and emotional energy of each person. For this reason, at a time of heightened revolutionary struggle, the undemanding instinct of reproduction spontaneously replaced the all-embracing "winged Eros".

But now the picture changes. The Soviet republic and the whole of toiling humanity are entering a period of temporary and comparative calm. The complex task of understanding and assimilating the achievements and gains that have been made is beginning. The proletariat, the creator of new forms of life, must be able to learn from all social and psychological phenomena, grasp the significance of these phenomena and fashion weapons from them for the self-defence of the class. Only when the proletariat has appropriated the laws not only of the creation of material wealth but also of inner, psychological life is it able to advance fully armed to fight the decaying bourgeois world. Only then will toiling humanity prove itself to be the victor, not only on the military and labour front but also on the psychological-cultural front.

Now that the revolution has proved victorious and is in a stronger position, and now that the atmosphere of revolutionary élan has ceased to absorb men and women completely, tender-winged Eros has emerged from the shadows and begun to demand his rightful place. "Wingless Eros" has ceased to satisfy psychological needs. Emotional energy has accumulated and men and women, even of the working class, have not yet learned to use it for the inner life of the collective. This extra energy seeks an outlet in the love-experience. The many-stringed lyre of the god of love drowns the monotonous voice of "wingless Eros". Men and women are now not only united by the momentary satisfaction of the sex instinct but are beginning to experience "love affairs" again, and to know all the sufferings and all the exaltations of love's happiness.

In the life of the Soviet republic an undoubted growth of intellectual and emotional needs, a desire for knowledge, an interest in scientific questions and in art and the theatre can be observed. This movement towards transformation inevitably embraces the sphere of love experiences too. Interest is aroused in the question of the psychology of sex, the mystery of love. Everyone to some extent is having to face up to questions of personal life. One notes with surprise that party workers who in previous years had time only for **Pravda** editorials and minutes and reports are reading fiction books in which winged Eros is lauded.

What does this mean? Is this a reactionary step? A symptom of the beginning of the decline of revolutionary creativity? Nothing of the sort! It is time we separated ourselves from the hypocrisy of bourgeois thought. It is time to recognise openly that love is not only a powerful natural factor, a biological force, but also a social factor. Essentially love is a profoundly social emotion. At all stages of human development

love has (in different forms, it is true) been an integral part of culture. Even the bourgeoisie, who saw love as a "private matter", was able to channel the expression of love in its class interests. The ideology of the working class must pay even greater attention to the significance of love as a factor which can, like any other psychological or social phenomenon, be channelled to the advantage of the collective. Love is not in the least a "private" matter concerning only the two loving persons: love possesses a uniting element which is valuable to the collective. This is clear from the fact that at all stages of historical development society has established norms defining when and under what conditions love is "legal" (i.e. corresponds to the interests of the given social collective), and when and under what conditions love is sinful and criminal (i.e. contradicts the tasks of the given society).

Historical notes

From the very early stages of its social being, humanity has sought to regulate not only sexual relations but love itself.

In the kinship community, love for one's blood relations was considered the highest virtue. The kinship group would not have approved of a woman sacrificing herself for the sake of a beloved husband; fraternal or sisterly attachment were the most highly regarded feelings. Antigone, who according to the Greek legend risked her life to bury the body of her dead brother, was a heroine in the eyes of her contemporaries. Modern bourgeois society would consider such an action on the part of a sister as highly curious. In the times of tribal rule, when the state was still in its embryonic stage, the love held in greatest respect was the love between two members of the same tribe. In an era when the social collective had only just evolved from the stage of kinship community and was still not firmly established in its new form, it was vitally important that its members were linked by mental and emotional ties. Love-friendship was the most suitable type of tie, since at that time the interests of the collective required the growth and accumulation of contacts not between the marriage pair but between fellow-members of the tribe, between the organisers and defenders of the tribe and state (that is to say, between the men of the tribe, of course; women at that time had no role to play in social life, and there was no talk of friendship among women). "Friendship" was praised and considered far more important than love between man and wife. Castor and Pollux were famous for their loyalty to each other and their unshakeable friendship, rather than for the feats they performed for their country. For the sake of friendship or its semblance a man might offer

his wife to an acquaintance or a guest.

The ancient world considered friendship and "loyalty until the grave" to be civic virtues. Love in the modern sense of the word had no place, and hardly attracted the attention either of poets or of writers. The dominant ideology of that time relegated love to the sphere of narrow, personal experiences with which society was not concerned; marriage was based on convenience, not on love. Love was just one among other amusements; it was a luxury which only the citizen who had fulfilled all his obligations to the state could afford. While bourgeois ideology values the "ability to love" provided it confines itself to the limits set down by bourgeois morality, the ancient world did not consider such emotions in its categories of virtues and positive human qualities. The person who accomplished great deeds and risked his life for his friend was considered a hero and his action "most virtuous", while a man risking himself for the sake of a woman he loved would have been reproached or even despised.

The morality of the ancient world, then, did not even recognise the love that inspired men to great deeds – the love so highly regarded in the feudal period – as worthy of consideration. The ancient world recognised only those emotions which drew its fellow-members close together and rendered the emerging social organism more stable. In subsequent stages of cultural development, however, friendship ceases to be considered a moral virtue. Bourgeois society was built on the principles of individualism and competition, and has no place for friendship as a moral factor. Friendship does not help in any way, and may hinder the achievement of class aims; it is viewed as an unnecessary manifestation of "sentimentality" and weakness. Friendship becomes an object of derision. Castor and Pollux in the New York or London of today would only evoke a condescending smile. This was not so in feudal society, where love-friendship was seen as a quality to be taught and encouraged.

The feudal system defended the interests of the noble family. Virtues were defined with reference not so much to relations between the members of that society as to the obligations of the individual to his or her family and its traditions. Marriage was contracted according to the interests of the family, and any young man (the girl had no rights whatever) who chose himself a wife against these interests was severely criticised. In the feudal era the individual was not supposed to place personal feelings and inclinations above the interests of family, and he who did so "sinned". Morality did not demand that love and marriage go hand in hand.

Nevertheless, love between the sexes was not neglected; in fact,

for the first time in the history of humanity it received a certain recognition. It may seem strange that love was first accepted in this age of strict asceticism, of crude and cruel morals, an age of violence and rule by violence; but the reasons for acceptance become clear when we take a closer look. In certain situations and in certain circumstances, love can act as a lever propelling the man to perform actions of which he would otherwise have been incapable. The knighthood demanded of each member fearlessness, bravery, endurance and great feats of individual valour on the battlefield. Victory in war was in those days decided not so much by the organisation of troops as by the individual qualities of the participants. The knight in love with the inaccessible "lady of his heart" found it easier to perform miracles of bravery, easier to win tournaments, easier to sacrifice his life. The knight in love was motivated by the desire to "shine" and thus to win the attention of his beloved.

The ideology of chivalry recognised love as a psychological state that could be used to the advantage of the feudal class, but nevertheless it sought to organise emotions in a definite framework. Love between man and wife was not valued, for the family that lived in the knightly castle and in the Russian boyar's *terem* was not held together by emotional ties. The social factor of chivalrous love operated where the knight loved a woman outside the family and was inspired to military and other heroic feats by this emotion. The more inaccessible the woman, the greater the knight's determination to win her favour and the greater his need to develop in himself the virtues and qualities which were valued by his social class. Usually the knight chose as his lady the woman least accessible, the wife of his suzerain, or often the queen. Only such a "platonic" love could spur the knight on to perform miracles of bravery and was considered virtuous and worthy. The knight rarely chose an unmarried woman as the object of his love, for no matter how far above him in station and apparently inaccessible the girl might be, the possibility of marriage and the consequent removal of the psychological lever could not be ruled out. Hence feudal morality combined recognition of the ideal of asceticism (sexual restraint) with recognition of love as a moral virtue. In his desire to free love from all that was carnal and sinful and to transform it into an abstract emotion completely divorced from its biological base the knight was prepared to go to great lengths, choosing as his lady a woman he had never seen or joining the ranks of the lovers of the Virgin Mary. Further he could not go.

Feudal ideology saw love as a stimulus, as a quality assisting

in social cohesion: spiritual love and the knight's adoration of his lady served the interests of the noble class. The knight who would have thought nothing of sending his wife to a monastery or of slaying her for unfaithfulness would have been flattered if she had been chosen by another knight as his lady, and would have made no objections to her platonic friendships. But while placing so much emphasis on spiritual love, feudal morality in no way demanded that love should determine legal marriage relationships. Love and marriage were kept separate by feudal ideology, and were only united by the bourgeois class that emerged in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The exalted sophistication of feudal love existed, therefore, alongside indescribably crude norms of relations between the sexes. Sexual intercourse both within and outside marriage lacked the softening and inspiring element of love and remained an undisguisedly physiological act.

The church pretended to wage war on depravity, but by encouraging "spiritual love" it encouraged crude animal relations between the sexes. The knight who would not be parted from the emblem of the lady of his heart, who composed poetry in her honour and risked his life to win her smile, would rape a girl of the urban classes without a second thought or order his steward to bring him a beautiful peasant for his pleasure. The wives of the knights, for their part, did not let slip the opportunity to enjoy the delights of the flesh with the troubadours and pages of the feudal household.

With the weakening of feudalism and the growth of new conditions of life dictated by the interests of the rising bourgeoisie, a new moral ideal of relations between the sexes developed. Rejecting platonic love, the bourgeoisie defended the violated rights of the body and injected the combination of the spiritual and physical into the very conception of love. Bourgeois morality did not separate love and marriage; marriage was the expression of the mutual attraction of the couple. In practice of course the bourgeoisie itself, in the name of convenience, continually sinned against this moral teaching, but the recognition of love as the pillar of marriage had a profound class basis.

Under the feudal system the family was held together firmly by the traditions of nobility and birth. The married couple was held in place by the power of the church, the unlimited authority of the head of the family, the strength of family tradition and the will of the suzerain; marriage was indissoluble. The bourgeois family evolved in different conditions; its basis was not the co-ownership of family wealth but the accumulation of capital. The family was the guardian of this capital; in order that accumulation might take place as rapidly as possible, it was

important that a man's savings should be handled with care and skill: in other words, that the woman should not only be a good housewife but also the helper and friend of her husband. With the establishment of capitalist relations and of the bourgeois social system, the family, in order to remain stable, had to be based not only on economic considerations but also on the co-operation of all its members, who had a joint interest in the accumulation of wealth. And co-operation could serve as a more powerful factor when husband and wife and parents and children were held together by strong emotional and psychological bonds.

At the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries, the new economic way of life gave rise to a new ideology. The conceptions of love and marriage gradually changed. The religious reformer, Luther, and the other thinkers and public figures of the Renaissance and the Reformation, understood the social force of love perfectly. Aware that the stability of the family – the economic unit on which the bourgeois system rests – required that its members be linked by more than economic ties alone, the revolutionary ideologists of the rising bourgeoisie propagated the new moral ideal of a love that embraced both the flesh and the soul. The reformers of the period challenged the celibacy of the clergy and made merciless fun of the "spiritual love" of chivalry that kept the knight in a continual state of aspiration but denied him the hope of satisfying his sensual needs. The ideologists of the bourgeoisie and the reformation recognised the legitimacy of the body's needs. Thus, while the feudal world had divided love into the sexual act (relations within marriage or with concubines) on the one hand, and spiritual, platonic love (the relations between the knight and the lady of his heart) on the other, the bourgeois class included both the physical attraction between the sexes and emotional attachments in its concept of love. The feudal ideal had separated love from marriage; the bourgeoisie linked the two. The bourgeoisie made love and marriage inseparable. In practice, of course, this class has always retreated from its ideal; but while the question of mutual inclination was never raised under feudalism, bourgeois morality requires that even in marriages of convenience, the partners should practise hypocrisy and pretend affection.

Traces of feudal tradition and feudal attitudes to marriage and love have come down to us, surviving the centuries and accommodating themselves to the morality of the bourgeois class. Royal families and the higher ranks of the aristocracy still live according to these old norms. In these circles it is considered "amusing" but rather "awkward" when a marriage is concluded on the basis of love. The princes and princesses of this world still have to bow to the demands of birth and

politics, joining themselves for life to people they do not care for.

In peasant families one also finds that family and economic considerations play a big part in marriage arrangements. The peasant family differs from that of the urban industrial bourgeoisie chiefly in that it is an economic labour unit; its members are so firmly held together by economic circumstances that inner bonds are of secondary importance. For the medieval artisan, love likewise had no role in marriage, for in the context of the guild system the family was a productive unit, and this economic rationale provided stability. The ideal of love in marriage only begins to appear when, with the emergence of the bourgeoisie, the family loses its productive functions and remains a consumer unit also serving as a vehicle for the preservation of accumulated capital.

But though bourgeois morality defended the rights of two "loving hearts" to conclude a union even in defiance of tradition, and though it criticised "spiritual love" and asceticism, proclaiming love as the basis of marriage, it nevertheless defined love in a very narrow way. Love is permissible only when it is within marriage. Love outside legal marriage is considered immoral. Such ideas were often dictated, of course, by economic considerations, by the desire to prevent the distribution of capital among illegitimate children. The entire morality of the bourgeoisie was directed towards the concentration of capital. The ideal was the married couple, working together to improve their welfare and to increase the wealth of their particular family unit, divorced as it was from society. Where the interests of the family and society were in conflict, bourgeois morality decided in the interests of the family (cf. the sympathetic attitude of bourgeois morality – though not the law – to deserters and to those who, for the sake of their families, cause the bankruptcy of their fellow shareholders). This morality, with a utilitarianism typical of the bourgeoisie, tried to use love to its advantage, making it the main ingredient of marriage, and thereby strengthening the family.

Love, of course, could not be contained within the limits set down by bourgeois ideologists. Emotional conflicts grew and multiplied, and found their expression in the new form of literature – the novel – which the bourgeois class developed. Love constantly escaped from the narrow framework of legal marriage relations set for it, into free relationships and adultery, which were condemned but which were practised. The bourgeois ideal of love does not correspond to the needs of the largest section of the population – the working class. Nor is it relevant to the life-style of the working intelligentsia. This is why in highly

developed capitalist countries one finds such an interest in the problems of sex and love and in the search for the key to its mysteries. How, it is asked, can relations between the sexes be developed in order to increase the sum of both individual and social happiness?

The working youth of Soviet Russia is confronting this question at this very moment. This brief survey of the evolution of the ideal of love-marriage relationships will help you, my young friend, to realise and understand that love is not the private matter it might seem to be at a first glance. Love is an important psychological and social factor, which society has always instinctively organised in its interests. Working men and women, armed with the science of marxism and using the experience of the past, must seek to discover the place love ought to occupy in the new social order and determine the ideal of love that corresponds to their class interests.

Love-comradeship

The new, communist society is being built on the principle of comradeship and solidarity. Solidarity is not only an awareness of common interests; it depends also on the intellectual and emotional ties linking the members of the collective. For a social system to be built on solidarity and co-operation it is essential that people should be capable of love and warm emotions. The proletarian ideology, therefore, attempts to educate and encourage every member of the working class to be capable of responding to the distress and needs of other members of the class, of a sensitive understanding of others and a penetrating consciousness of the individual's relationship to the collective. All these "warm emotions" – sensitivity, compassion, sympathy and responsiveness – derive from one source: they are aspects of love, not in the narrow, sexual sense but in the broad meaning of the word. Love is an emotion that unites and is consequently of an organising character. The bourgeoisie was well aware of this, and in the attempt to create a stable family bourgeois ideology erected "married love" as a moral virtue; to be a "good family man" was, in the eyes of the bourgeoisie, an important and valuable quality. The proletariat should also take into account the psychological and social role that love, both in the broad sense and in the sense of relationships between the sexes, can and must play, not in strengthening family-marriage ties, but in the development of collective solidarity.

What is the proletariat's ideal of love? We have already seen that each epoch has its ideal; each class strives to fill the conception of love with a moral content that suits its own interests. Each stage of

cultural development, with its richer intellectual and emotional experiences, redefines the image of Eros. With the successive stages in the development of the economy and social life, ideas of love have changed; shades of emotion have assumed greater significance or, on the other hand, have ceased to exist.

In the course of the thousand-year history of human society, love has developed from the simple biological instinct – the urge to reproduce which is inherent in all creatures from the highest to the lowest – into a most complex emotion that is constantly acquiring new intellectual and emotional aspects. Love has become a psychological and social factor. Under the impact of economic and social forces, the biological instinct for reproduction has been transformed in two diametrically opposed directions. On the one hand the healthy sexual instinct has been turned by monstrous social and economic relations, particularly those of capitalism, into unhealthy carnality. The sexual act has become an aim in itself – just another way of obtaining pleasure, through lust sharpened with excesses and through distorted, harmful titillations of the flesh. A man does not have sex in response to healthy instincts which have drawn him to a particular woman; a man approaches any woman, though he feels no sexual need for her in particular, with the aim of gaining his sexual satisfaction and pleasure through her. Prostitution is the organised expression of this distortion of the sex drive. If intercourse with a woman does not prompt the expected excitement, the man will turn to every kind of perversion.

This deviation towards unhealthy carnality takes relationships far from their source in the biological instinct. On the other hand, over the centuries and with the changes in human social life and culture, a web of emotional and intellectual experiences has come to surround the physical attraction of the sexes. Love in its present form is a complex state of mind and body; it has long been separated from its primary source, the biological instinct for reproduction, and in fact it is frequently in sharp contradiction with it. Love is intricately woven from friendship, passion, maternal tenderness, infatuation, mutual compatibility, sympathy, admiration, familiarity and many other shades of emotion. With such a range of emotions involved, it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish direct connection between the natural drive of "wingless Eros" and "winged Eros", where physical attraction and emotional warmth are fused. The existence of love-friendship where the element of physical attraction is absent, of love for one's work or for a cause, and of love for the collective, testify to the extent to which love has become "spiritualised" and separated from its biological base.

In modern society, sharp contradictions frequently arise and battles are waged between the various manifestations of emotion. A deep intellectual and emotional involvement in one's work may not be compatible with love for a particular man or woman, love for the collective might conflict with love for husband, wife or children. It may be difficult for love-friendship in one person to coexist with passion in another; in the one case love is predominantly based on intellectual compatibility, and in the other case on physical harmony. "Love" has many faces and aspects. The various shades of feeling that have developed over the ages and which are experienced by contemporary men and women cannot be covered by such a general and inexact term.

Under the rule of bourgeois ideology and the capitalist way of life, the complexity of love creates a series of complex and insoluble problems. By the end of the nineteenth century the many-sidedness of love had become a favourite theme for writers with a psychological bent Love for two or even three has interested and perplexed many of the more thoughtful representatives of bourgeois culture. In the sixties of the last century our Russian thinker and writer Alexander Herzen tried to uncover this complexity of the inner world and the duality of emotion in his novel **Who Is Guilty?**, and Chernyshevsky tackled the same questions in his novel **What is to be Done?**. Poetic geniuses such as Goethe and Byron, and bold pioneers in the sphere of relations between the sexes such as George Sand, have tried to come to terms with these issues in their own lives; the author of **Who Is Guilty?** also knew of the problems from his own experience, as did many other great thinkers, poets and public figures. And at this present moment many "small" people are weighed down by the difficulties of love and vainly seek for solutions within the framework of bourgeois thought. But the key to the solution is in the hands of the proletariat. Only the ideology and the life-style of the new, labouring humanity can unravel this complex problem of emotion.

We are talking here of the duality of love, of the complexities of "winged Eros"; this should not be confused with sexual relations "without Eros", where one man goes with many women or one woman with a number of men. Relations where no personal feelings are involved can have unfortunate and harmful consequences (the early exhaustion of the organism, venereal diseases etc.), but however entangled they are, they do not give rise to "emotional dramas". These "dramas" and conflicts begin only where the various shades and manifestations of love are present. A woman feels close to a man whose ideas, hopes and aspirations match her own; she is attracted physically to another. For

one woman a man might feel sympathy and a protective tenderness, and in another he might find support and understanding for the strivings of his intellect. To which of the two must he give his love? And why must he tear himself apart and cripple his inner self, if only the possession of both types of inner bond affords the fullness of living?

Under the bourgeois system such a division of the inner emotional world involves inevitable suffering. For thousands of years human culture, which is based on the institution of property, has been teaching people that love is linked with the principles of property. Bourgeois ideology has insisted that love, mutual love, gives the right to the absolute and indivisible possession of the beloved person. Such exclusiveness was the natural consequence of the established form of pair marriage and of the ideal of "all-embracing love" between husband and wife. But can such an ideal correspond to the interests of the working class? Surely it is important and desirable from the proletariat's point of view that people's emotions should develop a wider and richer range? And surely the complexity of the human psyche and the many-sidedness of emotional experience should assist in the growth of the emotional and intellectual bonds between people which make the collective stronger? The more numerous these inner threads drawing people together, the firmer the sense of solidarity and the simpler the realisation of the working-class ideal of comradeship and unity.

Proletarian ideology cannot accept exclusiveness and "all-embracing love". The proletariat is not filled with horror and moral indignation at the many forms and facets of "winged Eros" in the way that the hypocritical bourgeoisie is; on the contrary, it tries to direct these emotions, which it sees as the result of complex social circumstances, into channels which are advantageous to the class during the struggle for and the construction of communist society. The complexity of love is not in conflict with the interests of the proletariat. On the contrary, it facilitates the triumph of the ideal of love-comradeship which is already developing.

At the tribal stage love was seen as a kinship attachment (love between sisters and brothers, love for parents). The ancient culture of the pre-christian period placed love-friendship above all else. The feudal world idealised platonic courtly love between members of the opposite sex outside marriage. The bourgeoisie took monogamous marital love as its ideal. The working class derives its ideal from the labour co-operation and inner solidarity that binds the men and women of the proletariat together; the form and content of this ideal naturally differs from the conception of love that existed in other cultural epochs. The

advocacy of love-comradeship in no way implies that in the militant atmosphere of its struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat the working class has adopted a strait-jacket ideology and is mercilessly trying to remove all traces of tender emotion from relations between the sexes. The ideology of the working class does not seek to destroy "winged Eros" but, on the contrary, to clear the way for the recognition of the value of love as a psychological and social force.

The hypocritical morality of bourgeois culture resolutely restricted the freedom of Eros, obliging him to visit only the "legally married couple". Outside marriage there was room only for the "wingless Eros" of momentary and joyless sexual relations which were bought (in the case of prostitution) or stolen (in the case of adultery). The morality of the working class, on the other hand, in so far as it has already been formulated, definitely rejects the external forms of sexual relations. The social aims of the working class are not affected one bit by whether love takes the form of a long and official union or is expressed in a temporary relationship. The ideology of the working class does not place any formal limits on love. But at the same time the ideology of the working class is already beginning to take a thoughtful attitude to the content of love and shades of emotional experience. In this sense the proletarian ideology will persecute "wingless Eros" in a much more strict and severe way than bourgeois morality. "Wingless Eros" contradicts the interests of the working class. In the first place it inevitably involves excesses and therefore physical exhaustion, which lower the resources of labour energy available to society. In the second place it impoverishes the soul, hindering the development and strengthening of inner bonds and positive emotions. And in the third place it usually rests on an inequality of rights in relationships between the sexes, on the dependence of the woman on the man and on male complacency and insensitivity, which undoubtedly hinder the development of comradely feelings. "Winged Eros" is quite different.

Obviously sexual attraction lies at the base of "winged Eros" too, but the difference is that the person experiencing love acquires the inner qualities necessary to the builders of a new culture – sensitivity, responsiveness and the desire to help others. Bourgeois ideology demanded that a person should only display such qualities in their relationship with one partner. The aim of proletarian ideology is that men and women should develop these qualities not only in relation to the chosen one but in relation to all the members of the collective. The proletarian class is not concerned as to which shades and nuances of feeling predominate in winged Eros. The only stipulation is that these

emotions facilitate the development and strengthening of comradeship. The ideal of love-comradeship, which is being forged by proletarian ideology to replace the all-embracing and exclusive marital love of bourgeois culture, involves the recognition of the rights and integrity of the other's personality, a steadfast mutual support and sensitive sympathy, and responsiveness to the other's needs.

The ideal of love-comradeship is necessary to the proletariat in the important and difficult period of the struggle for and the consolidation of the dictatorship. But there is no doubt that with the realisation of communist society love will acquire a transformed and unprecedented aspect. By that time the "sympathetic ties" between all the members of the new society will have grown and strengthened. Love potential will have increased, and love-solidarity will become the lever that competition and self-love were in the bourgeois system. Collectivism of spirit can then defeat individualist self-sufficiency, and the "cold of inner loneliness", from which people in bourgeois culture have attempted to escape through love and marriage, will disappear. The many threads bringing men and women into close emotional and intellectual contact will develop, and feelings will emerge from the private into the public sphere. Inequality between the sexes and the dependence of women on men will disappear without trace, leaving only a fading memory of past ages.

In the new and collective society, where interpersonal relations develop against a background of joyful unity and comradeship, Eros will occupy an honourable place as an emotional experience multiplying human happiness. What will be the nature of this transformed Eros? Not even the boldest fantasy is capable of providing the answer to this question. But one thing is clear: the stronger the intellectual and emotional bonds of the new humanity, the less the room for love in the present sense of the word. Modern love always sins, because it absorbs the thoughts and feelings of "loving hearts" and isolates the loving pair from the collective. In the future society, such a separation will not only become superfluous but also psychologically inconceivable. In the new world the accepted norm of sexual relations will probably be based on free, healthy and natural attraction (without distortions and excesses) and on "transformed Eros".

But at the present moment we stand between two cultures. And at this turning-point, with the attendant struggles of the two worlds on all fronts, including the ideological one, the proletariat's interest is to do its best to ensure the quickest possible accumulation of "sympathetic feelings". In this period the moral ideal defining relationships is not the unadorned sexual instinct but the many-faceted love experi-

ence of love-comradeship. In order to answer the demands formulated by the new proletarian morality, these experiences must conform to three basic principles: 1. Equality in relationships (an end to masculine egoism and the slavish suppression of the female personality). 2. Mutual recognition of the rights of the other, of the fact that one does not own the heart and soul of the other (the sense of property, encouraged by bourgeois culture). 3. Comradely sensitivity, the ability to listen and understand the inner workings of the loved person (bourgeois culture demanded this only from the woman). But in proclaiming the rights of "winged Eros", the ideal of the working class at the same time subordinates this love to the more powerful emotion of love-duty to the collective. However great the love between two members of the collective, the ties binding the two persons to the collective will always take precedence, will be firmer, more complex and organic. Bourgeois morality demanded all for the loved one. The morality of the proletariat demands all for the collective.

But I can hear you objecting, my young friend, that though it may be true that love-comradeship will become the ideal of the working class, will this new "moral measurement" of emotions not place new constraints on sexual relationships? Are we not liberating love from the fetters of bourgeois morality only to enslave it again? Yes, my young friend, you are right. The ideology of the proletariat rejects bourgeois "morality" in the sphere of love-marriage relations. Nevertheless, it inevitably develops its own class morality, its own rules of behaviour, which correspond more closely to the tasks of the working class and educate the emotions in a certain direction. In this way it could be said that feelings are again in chains. The proletariat will undoubtedly clip the wings of bourgeois culture. But it would be short-sighted to regret this process, since the new class is capable of developing new facets of emotion which possess unprecedented beauty, strength and radiance. As the cultural and economic base of humanity changes, so will love be transformed.

The blind, all-embracing, demanding passions will weaken; the sense of property, the egoistical desire to bind the partner to one "forever", the complacency of the man and the self-renunciation of the woman will disappear. At the same time, the valuable aspects and elements of love will develop. Respect for the right of the other's personality will increase, and a mutual sensitivity will be learned; men and women will strive to express their love not only in kisses and embraces but in joint creativity and activity. The task of proletarian ideology is not to drive Eros from social life but to rearm him according to the

new social formation, and to educate sexual relationships in the spirit of the great new psychological force of comradely solidarity.

I hope it is now clear to you that the interest among young workers in the question of love is not a symptom of "decline". I hope that you can now grasp the place love must occupy in the relationships between young workers.

7

Diplomatic Duties

Her attempt to participate in the discussion on morality having met with silence from the many and scorn from the few, Kollontai retired to her trading mission to concentrate on "herring purchases". Admittedly some aspects of her work were of a grander nature – Kollontai played an important part in the negotiations that led to the signing, on 15 February 1924, of a treaty of mutual recognition between Norway and the USSR. But it is not surprising that after her years of activity in the revolutionary movement she found diplomatic life irksome and, in spite of the failures she had registered in the defence of her two most recent causes, was longing to return to the main arena of party debate and action. In the summer of 1925 she asked Litvinov to assist her in obtaining release from diplomatic duties. "I intend to go to Moscow," she wrote to him, "to ask the central committee and the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs to relieve me of my work in Norway. . . . The eternal 'uniform' which this work involves has exhausted me morally and physically."[45]

Her pleas were not immediately successful. The new year of 1926 found Kollontai still at her post in Oslo. A visit to Moscow in January, however, gave her the opportunity to speak at the trade unions' Hall of Columns on "Marriage and Everyday Life" (page 300-11) and to express her views briefly on the same topic in the press. A new marriage law was under discussion, and Kollontai must have felt that in view of this her speedy return to the centre of things was even more essential. In mid-April she was recalled to Moscow, but her request to be assigned to another type of work was not heeded. In September she was sent to Mexico, and she remained in the diplomatic corps until her retirement. Her intervention in the discussion on marriage and the family was her last contribution to political debate.

During the first months of its existence the Soviet government had abolished the tsarist marriage laws based on property and sexual inequality, and had introduced a new code in line with the new conception of human relations. As the years passed and as,

with the end of the civil war, the patterns of personal life could be distinguished, the inadequacies of the 1918 law became evident and the question of marriage began to be debated. In 1925 the Commissariat of Justice issued the draft plan for a new code, and during the eighteen months that followed its various paragraphs were discussed in towns and villages throughout the country.

The main criticism levelled by the Commissariat against the old law was that it did not sufficiently safeguard the interests of women. Basing itself on abstract notions of equality it had, for instance, stipulated that property acquired during marriage was not held in common. Since the revolution had been unable to provide all women immediately with employment opportunities, the majority of women were still engaged in unpaid domestic labour and were consequently left impoverished if they were divorced, their husbands having the right to all the possessions the couple had come by during their life together. The drafters of the new code thus proposed that common property be established. They were, in effect, suggesting that the value of domestic labour be recognised. The most important section of the code, and the one that aroused most controversy, was the one which proposed that de facto, unregistered marriage be legally invested with the same rights and duties as de jure, registered marriage. Under the New Economic Policy the position of women deteriorated in many ways, and the problems of female unemployment and prostitution became acute. Something had to be done to rescue these large numbers of women from poverty and destitution, and since the government could not afford a comprehensive system of social security, the lawyers from the Commissariat saw no option but to demand that men supported the women with whom they lived or had lived.

There were vociferous objections to these proposals both from members of the party and from members of the public. It was pointed out that because the draft offered no definition of marriage and left it up to the court to decide whether or not a de facto marriage existed, men would be left defenceless, at the mercy of the subjective whims of the courts. The opponents of the new code, disregarding the realities of the situation, portrayed men as the potential victims and women as idlers and parasites who would abuse the new law, luring the better-paid workers to their beds. Other, more serious criticisms were put forward in the course of the debate. During the difficult transitional period, it was argued, the country could not cope with disorderly personal relations – and

the recognition of de facto marriage would serve to reduce the already fragile cohesion of the social organism.

The line of argument with which the lawyers from the Commissariat countered the objections was remarkably similar to that of Kollontai's "Theses on Communist Morality in the Sphere of Marital Relations". The "Theses" had provoked little interest when they were published in 1921, and her ideas generally on relations between men and women in the future society had provoked a great deal of hostility; now, apparently, her theories were shared by the country's most prominent lawyers. However, although the theoretical formulations of the Commissariat were similar, they differed in one important respect; there was no policy on how to improve women's social status or defend their interests, and so the code had neither the advantages of a radical solution to the problem nor even the advantages of a conservative solution.

Kollontai did not in her speeches and articles make a point of demanding concrete measures to better women's position, and thus she did not go the full way to restoring balance in the debate. The Central Women's Department was in agreement with Kollontai over the desirability of scrapping Article 12 of the draft, which set down criteria for deciding whether a relationship should be classified as a de facto marriage. But Kollontai had lost her links even with that section of the apparatus over which she had once presided, and so she campaigned for her ideas alone. But in her isolation, and after crucial years away from the centre of political events, Kollontai was not able to present her arguments with any edge. She was asking the government to assume a new financial burden and was thus touching upon the whole thorny problem of the country's economic development, but she did not refer to this problem further than to say that the Commissariat of Finance would object to her taxation project. Debate in the party since 1923 had centred on the question of whether or not industrialisation was feasible in the immediate future. The progress of women's liberation was intimately connected with the progress of industrialisation, but Kollontai does not make this link and avoids all mention of the disagreement in the party on economic issues. Instead she makes her demands in a vacuum, and leaves her ideas open to easy dismissal as utopian. Without a political framework or a comprehensive set of demands for reforms, Kollontai's project is left hanging in the air. She gives the impression that with the passage of time all the problems of marriage and the family will mechanically solve

themselves. She is much too quick to assume the healthy nature of sexual relations among the working masses, even at a time of economic and social dislocation, and to gloss over the consequences of the unhealthy dependence of women upon men. However, although she does not examine its implications in any detail, she does bring up the question of birth control, which had been otherwise ignored in the debate. Also, and perhaps most importantly, she challenges the idea of alimony and its effectiveness in the protection of women's interests. Since men could easily change jobs and disappear, it was not always possible to sue for maintenance successfully, and since many workers earned so little, court proceedings were not worth the bother anyway: the 1918 code had established that the man, whether a registered husband or not, was responsible for the maintenance of his children, but in fact very few alimony suits of this kind had been filed. And it was precisely those women who were most in need – poor peasant women and working girls newly arrived from the country, whose relations with men tended to be on a casual basis – who would find it most difficult to prove paternity or the existence of de facto marriage, or who would be the least likely to apply to the courts for a redress of grievances. The vast majority of women were probably unaware of the rights they possessed.

The suggestion that Kollontai did make – that economic marital contracts replace simple registration – was no substitute for more positive action. Her scheme was a hasty and far from successful attempt to relate her theoretical position to the conditions of the transitional period. The introduction of contracts might have helped make clear to individuals the responsibilities involved in personal relationships in a period of economic hardship, but the exact nature of these contracts remains vague; it is difficult to see how, in the absence of a massive campaign to bring the politics of everyday life to the centre of the stage, men and women could have been persuaded to sign the contracts and, if they had, how an institutionalisation of the communist woman as a sewer of buttons on her husband's jacket could have been avoided.

More important than Kollontai's advocacy of contracts was her insistence that the beginnings of a social security system be established. Although she accepted that the poverty of the state meant the alimony system would have to stay, she argued that since the aim was to provide for women and children, society should step in to assist in cases where for some reason women were not in a

position to receive maintenance or the men in question to supply financial assistance.
But Kollontai's suggestions passed almost unnoticed. Times had changed. The fight for women's rights had become buried so deep beneath the economic questions of the day that the marriage debate was conducted without the problems of women's liberation being discussed. Even the Left Opposition, which was in favour of industrialisation and against the government's policies, failed to raise the issues of women's liberation.

The venomous attacks on Kollontai's essays and other literary work may have convinced her that a literary career was not for her after all. And her visits to Moscow in 1926 and 1927 probably convinced her that it was too late to return to politics. She was no longer able to comprehend social developments and could no longer therefore usefully comment upon them. She had been anxious to return to the Soviet Union, but returned only to discover that she could no longer orientate herself in political life and could not trust herself to take sides. The political climate had changed beyond recognition. The apparatus was dominated by a new breed of men (and just a few women) who owed their allegiance to the General Secretary of the party and were more comfortable obeying instructions than participating in discussion. By 1926 the traditions of party debate were rapidly disappearing, and when voices were raised to criticise the continued failure of the government over industrialisation and foreign policy, they were quickly muffled.
In her article "The Opposition and the Party Rank and File" (page 312-14), which appeared in **Pravda** in October 1927, Kollontai approaches the unequal battle between Stalin and the Left Opposition from the point of view of the discipline and unity necessary to accomplish the great tasks of socialist construction. She does not argue on the basis of the merits of the economic and political policies of the two sides, but insists that since the mass of people support the government, the opposition should dissolve itself and "merge" with the party. She refers as she had so often done in the past to the importance of the collective and of the initiative and activity of ordinary men and women; but whereas before she had seen this self-activity as active organisation towards certain vital goals, she now emphasised the passive acceptance of the leadership's

decisions. Kollontai had learned rather too well the lesson of her defeat in 1921 – that the self-activity of the masses had to be directed by the party. But she does not seem to have been entirely convinced by her own logic, and she refrained from writing any more newspaper articles; she may well have been glad to return later that month to her diplomatic duties. From that time onward she made no comment on or contribution to general political life.

Trotsky wrote in his autobiography that Kollontai "waged many a battle against the Lenin-Trotsky régime, only to bow most movingly later on to the Stalin régime",[47] but in fact she bowed a great deal less movingly than most. Although she did not join any of the oppositions to Stalin and never made any open criticisms of his régime, she neither joined the stalinists nor expressed open support for them. Her residence abroad and the excuse of the pressure of work enabled her to put up a very effective passive resistance. While all who remained at liberty in Moscow (even Krupskaya) had, at regular intervals, to express their loyalty to the régime and their devotion to the great leader in print, Kollontai managed to write nothing in this vein – by writing more or less nothing at all. While in the years immediately after the revolution she had supplied a steady flow of articles to national and local newspapers, her output after 1923 sank to a couple of dozen articles in as many years. The failure to write sufficient quantities of sufficiently effusive prose could be seen as political protest on Kollontai's part, and Stalin undoubtedly saw it as such and was suspicious. However, her silence began in 1923, before stalinism became a rigid system and when political debate was still in progress; her retreat from politics would therefore seem to result from a general inability to cope with the poblems that faced the party in the twenties, rather than solely from disgust at the antics of the great leader.

Kollontai still took up the pen to write about women, but only very occasionally. When asked to contribute articles for the women's journals back home, she kept to topics which involved the description of past events and required no comment on the present situation: in 1937 she wrote in **Rabotnitsa** about "Women in 1917", in 1946 about "Lenin and Working Women in 1917", and in 1948 on "The Thirtieth Anniversary of the All-Russian Congress of Working and Peasant Women". Another favourite theme was the lives of famous women: she wrote about Clara Zetkin, Krupskaya and the actress Komissarzhevskaya.

Aware that events were not unfolding as she had envisaged, and

that although millions of women had been brought into the national economy little had been done to free women from their domestic responsibilities, Kollontai nevertheless appears to have felt that her theoretical incapabilities extended to the "woman question" too. Kollontai, who had dreamed of the future collective, of the new woman and the new human relationships, must have found the hymns of praise in Stalin's press to the family, the housewife and the heroine-mother a cruel mockery, and although she could not actively dissociate herself from the new policy on women she could and did passively dissociate herself by failing to comment on topical events and by addressing herself only to the past. This failure was in itself, in the Soviet Russia of that period, an act of political significance.

In view of the fact that she had long considered work among women to be the main area of her political activity, the silence was particularly striking. In the last twenty-five years of her life she appears to have only made two public statements on the position of the contemporary Soviet woman. The first occasion was in 1935, when as a member of the Soviet delegation to the League of Nations she spoke in the legal commission on questions of the legal and economic position of women. Kollontai kept to the facts as much as possible, emphasising the impressive legal equalities that Soviet women had won; **Pravda** considered only one short extract to be worth quoting. On the second occasion, in her article "Soviet Woman: Citizeness with Equal Rights" (pp. 315-17), which appeared in **Sovetskaya zhenshchina** ("Soviet Woman") in the autumn of 1948, she limits herself to a survey of legal benefits, with another long diversion into history. Her only moving bow is the congratulations which she offers the government on having created the conditions for woman to be able to "fulfil her natural duty . . . to be a mother, the educator of her children and the mistress of her home."

Marriage and Everyday Life

Comrades and Citizens,

The great interest which the draft of the new marriage code has aroused, the fierce debates which have unfolded at VTsIk* sessions devoted to discussing it, and the extraordinarily serious and careful approach our republic is taking to the solution of this question, are not accidental. "Being determines consciousness", according to the old marxist maxim, and an understanding of this fact has, to a considerable degree if not entirely, determined the tone, the content and the legislative essence of the new code which is currently under general and heated discussion. In 1918 or 1919 a draft marriage code would not have provoked such controversy and disagreement. At that time there would have been no grounds for such an intense debate. Only with the course of time (as a period of large-scale economic construction rapidly develops, the cultural level of the population rises and economic relations within the country are stabilised) is the problem of marriage and the legal relationships connected with it posed in all its importance and magnitude. . . .

In fact, alongside the stabilisation of economic relations a parallel process of the stabilisation of property relations can be observed, the importance and complexities of which the law-makers when confronting these questions and drawing up the marriage code could not but keep in view. The present debate is, in the main, over the concrete issue of whether to approve or oppose the marriage code, the fundamental question of the new way of life and the old psychology, and of whether the code corresponds to the conditions and specificities of the new way of life that lies at the basis of all disagreements.

Certain clearly-defined groupings have emerged during the discussion: these can be divided into three main groups.

The first is the conservatives, who hanker after the strong and legally entrenched family. The second is the liberals who dream in the long term of establishing stable marriage, but who are prepared to make some concessions to the new life-styles. Finally there is the left tendency which demands that the new law recognises the social changes that have already taken place and openly adopts them in the future. There is no

* All-Russian All-Union Central Executive Committee.

doubt that the class contradictions in our society, which we have obviously yet to outgrow, are at the root of these groupings.

On the one hand the petty-bourgeois way of life and its ideology is swamping us and on the other the new life-styles, the new views and the ideology of the working class are making themselves felt. Petty-bourgeois ideology proclaims that vice is rife and is frightened by the fact that its traditional norms are not always observed.

But what constitutes vice and depravity?

We are well aware that everyday life frequently overtakes ideology. We can observe this happening in our country: although the way of life is already different, the ideology has changed very little. And when relations between a man and a woman are not those of established morality the petty-bourgeois is ready to see vice.

In Western Europe and America the principle that the only correct form of relationship between a man and a woman is monogamy is firmly upheld. But the "ideologists" forget that besides monogamy, so dear to their hearts, there is polygamy practised by the Moslems and there are countries where women are fighting for monogamy. There are Negro tribes where only marriages between brother and sister, son and mother are considered legal. In other tribes it is held that a wife need only be faithful to her husband three days a week and so long as these conditions are observed, vice does not occur.

In the upper classes it was considered essential that a girl remain a virgin until marriage. This can perhaps be explained by the system of class and property relations which existed at that time, the system of inheritance and the sum of factors influencing and moulding the environment. But we, after all, live in other times, in other conditions; we have completely different aspirations and a completely different way of looking at things. If everything is not yet as it should be, we must take measures now to explain the ideas in which we believe and for which we are fighting.

People say that the communists, komsomol members and the students at the workers' faculties are too free in their sexual relations. Quite clearly one must expect some abnormalities in the behaviour of people working in the plants and factories, who have to live in extremely difficult and cramped conditions. A certain abnormality will be inevitable until the conditions of daily living improve for this enormous category of workers. But when people say that sexual relations are too free, they forget that young people today hardly ever turn to prostitution. Which, we have to ask, is the better solution? The philistine sees the new relationships as depraved, while a defender of the new way of life sees

them as an improvement in human relationships.

If we compare youth today with students before the revolution, the latter emerge as the more "sinful". No sweeping allegations, however, were ever levelled against them. Everything thus depends upon one's point of view, and petty-bourgeois ideology is still having difficulties trying to arrive at a correct viewpoint. We can understand why the question of the new marriage code has been so hotly debated. We have still not worked out a definite viewpoint on these questions; we have not realised that although we may not have class relations, group relations do exist.

The debate has centred on the new code; can such a debate entirely satisfy us? The marriage code has had a strange fate: it has been criticised both from the right and from the left. The laws of the bourgeois capitalist state regulating the relations between the sexes, while making concessions to the times, strive to fulfil their main purpose, which is the strengthening of property relations. What is the approach of the new code?

At a first glance it seems it has gone a long way and made great advances on the old marriage law which was issued in the first days of Soviet power. What are the important aspects of the new code? Most important of all is the elimination of article 52 of the old code, according to which only civil (secular) marriage registered at the ZAGS* is recognised as involving conjugal rights and responsibilities and is protected by the law. Paragraph 10 of the new code declares registered and unregistered marriage to be equal, i.e. de facto marriage is given the same status as de jure marriage, and this would seem to be a great step forward. Finally, paragraph 12 of the new code states that within the marriage relationship the partners are obliged to support each other, and if one is unable to work or is out of work, he or she has a right to the support of the other. Paragraphs 26 and 27 deal with the alimony which is to be paid in the case of both registered and unregistered marriages, and it seems that here too progress has been made. But how has the fundamental reasoning behind this provision been reached?

In order to answer this question we have to look back and trace the development of the debate. We should note that during the broad discussion on the new code at the second session of VTsIk it was, on the whole, the peasantry who spoke in favour of registered marriage and in particular those peasants who were not secure in their holdings. From one point of view they might be said to be right in their

* The Civil Registrar's Office.

stand, for they approached the question not so much from a moral as from an economic point of view. The workers, male and female, spoke in favour of equalising unregistered with registered marriage. In so far as we still do not have a genuine and thoroughgoing construction of new life-styles, for the working man and working woman the family is a consumer unit; but the strengthening of this consumer unit is for them of little or no importance. But we can now see clearly that a certain section of the population, first and foremost the peasantry, is in favour of strengthening marriage by registration; they demand some official formula that makes personal relations and economic rights clear. Such aspirations, which may exist for a long time to come, are completely understandable. Petty-bourgeois ideology, on the other hand, also criticises the new code, but from the angle of the struggle against depravity and the fight for the purity of relationships. They support stable, registered marriage and ought logically also to favour a ban on divorce, to protect society from that general chaos to which their ideology is so opposed.

Can marriage, however, be made as strong as it was a hundred or a hundred and fifty years ago? Do laws exist which, in the absence of inner impulses, could help to strengthen marriage and prevent its disintegration? In the middle ages people were buried alive for adultery, but morality was not improved. The Napoleonic code, which came into force when the feudal system was giving way to capitalist relations, ruled that the murder of an unfaithful wife was not punishable by law, and forbade the mother of an "illegitimate" child to seek out the father. However, even under these harsh laws vice did not disappear. The code, it transpired, could not save the situation, and despite its cruel provisions marriage was a less stable institution in France than elsewhere. What does this show? It shows the impossibility of establishing certain kinds of relationships by means of a code when life is pushing in another direction. If we thought to use such methods to combat the negative aspects of marriage, we would have to organise "extraordinary commissions" for the struggle against immorality. Could we even then guarantee that our aim would be achieved? No, for harsh laws have only one effect – people learn to get round them.

Let us look into the question further. Does registration or the exclusive recognition of de jure marriage benefit the woman? It might seem that registration gives the woman more security, if, of course, the husband is in a position to be able to provide for her. But the de facto wife has the same security. Our law states that she also has the right to alimony. Our new law is guilty of considerable inadequacies, for it

strengthens rather than eliminates the main defect of the law by the vagueness of its provisions on alimony. The new law is designed to suit the Nepmen, the wealthy and the rich peasants. Paragraph 12 states that every married man or woman who is unable to work has the right to demand alimony from his or her partner. But from what husband shall the woman receive assistance? From the de jure or the de facto husband? When the husband is able to support his wife, when he is a specialist or a rich peasant, his wife will get something, and everything is fine. But how can a man support his wife if he has not enough or only just enough to live on himself? Or how can a peasant give his wife alimony when he lives on bread and kvass for six months of the year? How can he support a divorced wife when he has only one cow, one house and four children? Or what about the worker whose wages are hardly sufficient for himself alone? What can he be expected to contribute? And if, to add to this, he has a de facto wife with children – can he support two families? Of course not. Take another case. The wife has worked for many years on the same peasant plot as her husband; when she divorces him, she must receive half of the property they have accumulated. But what will she receive if they have no property? Alimony, it follows, can only be received when the husband in question is at hand and has a sufficiently full purse. Is it right that we should base our norms on the position of some one hundred thousand or so well-off people?

We have seen what the law gives the de jure wife; let us turn now to the case of the de facto wife. The de facto wife is to be made equal with the de jure wife. But who is the de facto wife? Which one is she? I doubt whether there is anyone among you who did not have at least three de facto wives before you were thirty. [Laughter.] Who exactly are comrades Krylenko and Brandenburgskii supporting? They say that the court tackles this problem, discovers how long the couple lived together, whether or not they had a joint household; whether, in a word, they were man and wife. The court decides these complex questions. Comrade Krylenko maintains that we are taking a step forward when we do not punish a person for having a de jure and a de facto marriage at the same time. But on the other hand, our code makes it illegal to register a de jure marriage if a de facto marriage already exists. This is one of the inadequacies of the code.

The provisions on alimony are not new. Such laws have been passed in bourgeois Europe and in America. In Norway, for example, a law on alimony has existed for ten years; young people in that country turn to prostitution in order to avoid the petty bourgeois regulations.

The economic situation of the worker, of course, plays a considerable role here. For what alimony can in fact be taken from him? He has so little money he could not pay the third of his wages that the law justly demands. It frequently happens that when a factory worker finds out that part of his wage is threatened by an alimony order he throws in his job and transfers to another factory, and so on. In such cases there is no one from whom the woman can receive money.

Let us now consider the question of alimony for children. Provision for the welfare of both legitimate and illegitimate children is not peculiar to our law, for such provision exists in Western Europe as well. But what have our provisions meant in practice? Comparatively few such cases come before the courts. According to the statistics given by comrade Kurskii at the VTsIk session, out of seventy-eight cases only three are alimony orders concerning the welfare of children. This is evidence that the women themselves do not believe that the fathers of their children can be found. [Laughter.]

But it is not only a sense of the hopelessness of the search that holds women back. There are other reasons. One woman does not want to beg and humiliate herself, another is afraid of speaking out about her relationship because the father of her child has a de jure wife, a third is simply ashamed etc. As a result, the situation is far from bright. Alimony was introduced to ease the position of the mother, but this aim has not been achieved; either there is no one from whom to receive alimony, or the woman does not want to fight for her rights. As a result children are often thrown out on to the streets, the number of homeless children increases and the healthy development of the future generation is endangered.

The laws on alimony have been in effect for eight years, but have they in practice helped anyone? Alimony does not solve the social problems nor does it guarantee "morality". Is this not the best answer to those who say that if we change the law on alimony we will have "Lord knows what"? One Norwegian judge told me of a case where, in the course of one month, four orders for alimony from four different towns at some distance from each other were filed on one worker. Asked by the judge how he could have managed to have been in all four towns in the space of one day, the young man solved the riddle by explaining that during the summer he had a motor-bike. Since it is impossible to maintain four families on one wage, I would recommend to comrades and citizens that in order to secure the implementation of the new marriage code they refrain from using motor-bikes.

To designate certain individuals as responsible for the un-

employed and unemployable, knowing them to be incapable of the task, is simply to wash one's hands of a difficult question that needs solving. The new draft creates three types of wife: the registered, the unregistered and the casual. Whereas the first two now have equal rights, the third has no rights at all. But who are these "casual" wives? They are the peasant women who have no land and drift to the towns looking for work, the working women living in the dreadfully cramped and impossibly hard conditions around the plants and factories. The law refuses to defend the rights of these women.

From all that I have already said, it is clear that the provisions of the new marriage law designed to guarantee the interests of the mother and child cannot satisfy us. For the code strengthens petty-bourgeois tendencies and fails to take into consideration the perspectives of our socialist construction. The code must therefore be changed. The new code is as unsatisfactory as the old, in that it does not guarantee the welfare of children and mothers with small children. That is why it is essential that we consider the matter seriously and approach the reworking of the code carefully.

I must make one other point. Some people believe that our alimony system is workable because the majority of men called upon to pay are merchants, Nepmen and, on the whole, well-off persons who are able to bear the financial burden. But this is not the case. For it is necessary to grasp certain specificities of our society. There are de facto wives who are never seen with their husbands and whose existence no one even suspects. Brandenburgskii has very rightly drawn attention to this fact. This category and the others I have mentioned are not provided for, and are not in a position to seek help from anyone. Who should take upon themselves the support of these women? The collective should be responsible for their welfare. We consider that the law has approached this question in the wrong manner. The peasants, as we have already noted, are dissatisfied with the new law. They demand the registration of marriage and they are right in their way. Can we offer them any help? Can we go any of the way towards meeting their demands? Yes, there is a way we can help. As far as the Union is concerned, it is the regulation not of the personal relations of the two parties involved but of the property norms of their household economy that is important. We would consider the replacement of the registration of marriage relations by a new form as being in the best interests of the peasantry and a section of the urban population. What do we mean by this contract? It is not in general possible to strengthen marriage, and registration, with its artificial levellings and divisions, will in no way help to achieve the aim.

It does not even protect the interests of women and children of the working sections of the population. And there is no reason why we should worry ourselves about the Nepmen. The peasant who still needs to make his family official as an economic unit should be given the opportunity to do so by the provision of special marriage contracts, which can vary in accordance with the given conditions and the specificities of the households of those concerned. Such contracts would on the one hand be to the complete satisfaction of the peasantry, and on the other they would eliminate the harmful aspects of mechanical registration. It would simply not be profitable, in view of the conveniences it offered, to fail to conclude such a contract, and such a practice would end the division of wives into various categories. According to paragraph 10 of the code, any kind of property-economic contracts may be concluded at marriage. We consider that it would be sensible, rather than introduce such contracts and dispense with any kind of registration, to establish various kinds of marital economic contract which would be suited to the different groups and would lay down detailed norms for the regulation of the property and economic relations of the parties. Not the mechanical registration of cohabitation, but a clear and exact formulation of intent, leaving no room for incorrect interpretations.

These contracts are important not only for the peasantry but for working women too, who will thus have the chance to know and feel that their domestic labour is also in some way valued, and is recognised to be as important as work in the factories and plants. For while consumer units exist in the form of the worker's family, it is essential that the labour of the woman in this unit be taken into consideration in a definite way and valued. This would lead to the real and not merely verbal equality of the parties within the unit.

The conclusion of a marital economic contract would improve the position of both sides; there would no longer be de jure and de facto wives, registered and unregistered. The positive aspects of such a practice would persuade women of the need to register their relations with men in these contracts.

In the towns, the contracts would secure a whole series of advantages for the working woman, establishing her privileges and her equality before the government and before the law. The contracts would introduce absolute clarity into relationships; they would give the non-party husband the right to say to his communist wife: "Despite the fact that you are a communist and have responsible work to do, my buttons need sewing on." [Laughter.] I do not want to make an analogy with the accommodation contract, but the benefits and conveniences

offered are very similar. It is of course possible to live in a flat without a specially negotiated contract, but the contract undoubtedly means that misunderstandings and debatable points can be more easily resolved, since all or most of them are dealt with in its terms. This circumstance is of considerable importance, and should not be lost sight of. But there is the question: what will happen to those women who have not considered marital economic contracts? Who is to provide for them? They are to be provided from the maternity and insurance funds to which all adult and employed persons make contributions. [Voice from the hall: "Collective responsibility." Laughter.] Women who are alone will be supported by the money from this fund. They will be pleased with this arrangement, for it frees them from the humiliating position of waiting for hand-outs from the men, and rescues them from the necessity of having to beg for what is legally theirs by right. And such an arrangement will be much more efficient. How should this fund be run? Both men and women should pay into the fund, so that in a time of need their child does not find itself homeless. The size of the contribution should correspond to the size of income. If contributions are made obligatory for all, it should be possible to provide for both mothers and children. Greater financial resources would be necessary if the plans were to be comprehensively carried out. Taking the annual birth-rate to be over four million and the majority of peasant children to be covered by marital economic contracts, one million children at the most will come under the scheme. These for the most part will be the children of single mothers, of landless peasant women, of working women, of young girls and students. And as it will cost ten rubles a month to provide for each child, even if the figure is as high as one million, that will mean an annual sum of 120 million rubles is needed. If we divide this sum equally among the sixty million adult citizens of the USSR, the result is a tax of two rubles per person per year. This is not a large sum, and as the tax will be progressive, those with low incomes will not even have to pay this much. The fund will also provide for the general protection of motherhood and childhood. We can take the first step. Alimony contributions will be paid into a general fund, and the mother and child will receive the help they need from the collective.

This is a perspective and a method that springs from the socialist way of life and from the socialist approach to the solution of this complex problem. Of course, I can see the objections. The Commissariat of Finance will not be enthusiastic. The question, however, is very important, and it therefore demands serious thought and careful discussion. It is time we recognised that every woman in the Soviet Union giving birth

to a child is fulfilling a social function, and that every woman has the right to desire and strive to be free from anxieties when bringing up her child, and to be free from the fear that some day she and the child will find themselves in need and without any means of sustenance. It is essential that we take all measures possible to save the rising generation from prostitution, homelessness etc.

Our material position is not rosy, and I am well aware of the difficulties that we would inevitably face in trying to carry out this scheme. But all the same, things are not so desperate that we cannot find ways of achieving our aim. After all, our economy is improving, production is expanding and our budget is growing every year. In two or three years' time we shall be able to see that this fund is less of a burden on the country's budget. Aside from these purely financial objections, I can foresee various others. It will be said that such a scheme would free men from all restraint and that vice would spread, in the long run destroying the family. But is it true that the alimony system prevents vice? If we look around us, we can see that the alimony laws do not reduce vice, and so we cannot talk of laws corrupting or restraining. If it is possible to "restrain", it is not by passing severe laws but by creating normal living conditions. This is the best way to promote the victory of morality over vice. While we still have inequalities, terrible overcrowding and lack of space in the factories and hostels, we cannot expect these problems to sort themselves out.

There is one question to which I would like to turn your attention, and that is the question of birth control. Expressed very briefly, the essence of what I want to say is this: let there be fewer children born, but let them be of better "quality". Every child should be wanted by its mother. It is vital that the interests of each child be defended not only by its mother and father but also by the whole collective. [Remark from the floor: "The struggle for productivity of labour and the quality of the finished product." Laughter.] It is necessary to raise the consciousness of the population correspondingly, to conduct a campaign to explain the importance of these points and to develop agitational work on a broad scale.

We must establish a situation where the fund can provide for children whose fathers are unable to provide for them. This is of great importance in drawing young people away from prostitution; the old reasoning that by paying for a prostitute the man was insuring himself against the trouble of paying alimony would no longer apply. The fears that our young people are beginning their sexual life too early are not groundless. And we are not closing our eyes to the abnormalities and

the extremely disturbing incidents that sometimes take place. But we would argue that in order to struggle against the negative aspects of the situation we should act by raising consciousness and conducting propaganda, and not by issuing statutes of various kinds. Laws will not achieve our aims. Whatever age we established as that at which a man and a woman might legally live together, our decree would not be effective. Measures of a different nature are called for: agitation on a mass scale, the dissemination of scientific knowledge and general cultural work. For the energy of young people must be preserved and not wasted. We should encourage young people not to begin their sexual lives at too early an age and we should fight the negative aspects of early sexual life.

People waste their time when they slander the komsomol, accusing its members of engaging in vice. If the accusers took it upon themselves to think a little, they would see that favourable conditions for depravity do not exist, and they would understand how false their allegations are. For the komsomol members work all day at the plants and factories and all evening for the party, and carry a mass of weighty responsibilities for the party and for Soviet power and society: what time do they have for a personal life? Then again, what is this "vice" under discussion? Our komsomol members, in contrast to the old pre-revolutionary students, do not frequent the brothels. And in relationships between the young men and women of the komsomol, which by no stretch of the imagination could be described as depraved, we have an equality which humiliates and compromises no one. This is what the ideologists of "vice" forget. We do not, of course, intend to argue that we have completely normal relations between young people. As yet, we still have no new ideas in this sphere; but we must remember that it is essential to inspire young people with scorn for the philistine bourgeois family idyll. We have to explain to them the harm of becoming so entirely engrossed in love that fundamental tasks are forgotten. I remember talking to a girl I knew in the komsomol who mentioned that Ivan had not been re-elected to the presidium of some commission. I asked if Marusya had been elected and was told that she had not. I asked why, when both were good active people and their work satisfactory. "How can we vote for them when they are in love and sit looking at each other the whole day? What kind of activists does that make them?"

Or here is another instance. I do not recall exactly which year it was, but at a congress of working women where a very important question of principle was under discussion one of the delegates kept on asking us for permission to go to Tula as her husband, whom she had

not seen for three years, was there. When we pointed out that she could easily postpone her trip until the end of the congress the woman even cried. I do not remember if we let her go, I rather think we did, but she was removed from responsible work soon after, and her conduct was taken into consideration when assigning her to other work. What does this mean? It means, not that we reject love, but that we put it in its place, where it does not overshadow what is important in life.

Comrades and citizens, I will bring my remarks to a close. We have put forward the idea of a marriage contract, we have suggested the creation of the necessary insurance fund and have brought up the question of birth control. If these demands are taken up, this will give us a guarantee that the new socialist life-style will be built, the most important part of which must be socialist construction.

Down with all hypocrisy and all fear of speaking out over the question of marriage. Many of our revolutionary comrades are afraid to be frank. The old forms of marriage are dying out, and life is bringing forward new forms which correspond to the new conditions. Make way for the future; a future based on healthy comradely relations, free from negative tendencies and guaranteeing the correct development of the rising generation. We greet the collective that educates the younger generation and raises its cultural level. We have no need of the kind of "family" where the husband and wife are united only with each other and are separated from the collective. We greet the new conditions of life that give joy and happiness to the new labours of humanity.

The Opposition and the Party Rank and File

The lower one descends the party ladder and merges with the rank and file, the more definite and pronounced one finds the negative attitude to the Opposition. This is characteristic. Throughout the lower levels of the party the feeling towards the Opposition is one of hostility and of a bitter, almost malicious resentment. This fact cannot be explained by saying, as the Opposition does, that the party apparatus has "suppressed" popular opinion and stifled its true voice. Resentment has assumed a mass character, and when this is the case one has to look deeper for the answer; one has to study the life and mood of the masses.

In the party, just as in any collective, there is always, at any given moment and in any given situation, a dominant mood, some kind of pervasive feeling. If the policy and orientation of the apparatus do not coincide with the mood of the rank and file of the collective, this fact will make itself felt, however strong the government apparatus, in the way that masses react to the current events. The bitterness, hostility and resentment with which the lower levels of the party meet any sign of opposition is the result of a definite intellectual and mental growth on the part of the masses and of a development towards collective thinking.

Our Union is celebrating its tenth anniversary. We are at the peak of construction fever. The workers and the politically advanced peasantry are busy with vital and important tasks; they are creating new forms of economy and new life-styles, establishing new ways of co-ordinating sections of the government and sections of the economic organism. And the main body of this work is being carried out in the countless collectives – in the soviets, the trade unions, the commissions and the various committees. Nowhere in the world has the collective way of work taken such hold as in the Soviet Union. Sometimes this leads to an excessive number of collective organisations and makes united action difficult; but that is another question. The important fact is that all these collective undertakings are educating the people in a new approach to life, a new ideology. The masses are already getting used to thinking things out for themselves instead of relying on a leader. One only has to take a look at how meetings are conducted nowadays, even in the less experienced organisations. Each person present taken as an individual may be only a "little man" who has not per-

formed any particular services in the past and has no great store of knowledge – but it is this "little man" who produces that necessary word or two which is to the point and contributes to the work at hand. These various thoughts and suggestions fit together and make up practical and well thought-out resolutions and plans.

But once a decision has been taken, the collective sees that it is strictly observed. The collective has grown more insistent in demanding that its wishes and its resolutions over any matter, however unimportant, be reckoned with. This is a healthy response, signifying that the organisational principle is now gaining over the practice, inevitable during the period of civil war, of initiative on the part of small groups or individuals, of initiative that sometimes degenerated into anarchistic individualism. Those were different times; sometimes even then, "self-discipline" eased the situation. But now we are in a period of construction and we need not only unity in our actions but unity in our thinking. The masses instinctively understand this. That is why they are so opposed to the Opposition. The Opposition destroys the cohesion of the collective; a cohesion that has been built up with such difficulty. The Opposition transgresses the basic demand of the masses: the demand that discipline be observed. It is working as a group, as a collective, that makes for a completely new understanding of discipline – not as obedience to an order but as a merging of one's will with the will of the collective. Discipline is the cement that binds together the human bricks and forms a single and powerful collective.

The hostility of the rank and file of the party to the word "Opposition" stems partly from the belief that the Opposition is acting in an "anarchistic" manner. They are enraged by the fact that the Opposition ignores their wishes and yet still insists that it is speaking in their name. You hear workers saying, "Just look what supporters we have found. Who gave them the right to speak for us? We do not think like they do. If we are dissatisfied about something, we can stand up for our policies in the party for ourselves." This sort of mood obviously has nothing to do with "government pressure".

The masses do not believe in the Opposition. They greet its every statement with laughter. Does the Opposition really think that the masses have such a short memory? If there are shortcomings in the party and in its political line, who else beside these prominent members of the Opposition were responsible for them? The Opposition's argument comes to this: the politics of the party and the party apparatus went to pieces the day the Oppositionists broke with the party. There's something unconvincing about this: the Oppositionists hit out right and left

at the apparatus and at party policies, but really it is a question of power. The masses turn away in disgust.

The masses distrust the Opposition; they are always repelled by unprincipled behaviour. The formation of a bloc with yesterday's opponents is, for example, completely incomprehensible to politically inexperienced rank-and-file party members. Breach of promise is even less understandable: the members of the Opposition had given a solemn promise in writing that they would bow to the will of the party, but the next day broke their promise. The Jesuit rule "the end justifies the means" cannot be invoked by members of the collective. It is impossible to build a collective if members cannot be trusted to keep their word or honour their promises.

Actions speak louder than words; if a person does not keep his or her promise to our collective, he or she can hardly be said to be one of us. The masses do not forgive those who make light of the collective, who do not play straight. The masses are, with great effort and much hard work, overcoming the disuniting influence of petty-bourgeois individualism and they will never understand or forgive those who fail to carry out their responsibilities to the collective. The masses will not stand for the Opposition's violation of discipline and unity. The masses have no faith in the Opposition and will not forgive it its jesuitical manoeuvring within the party. The masses firmly dissociate themselves from the Opposition's platform – a platform which does not correspond in any way to the mood pervading the party ranks.

Unless the Opposition turns a sharp ear to the mood of the masses, it cannot but be defeated. V.I.Lenin's strength was his ability to understand the aspirations and demands of the masses. A group cannot attempt to break the will of the collective and go unpunished. Such a group is no longer the friend of the masses. As the masses see it, the Opposition will only demonstrate real "collective democracy", as opposed to petty-bourgeois democracy, when it shows itself willing to understand that the decision of the Plenum of the Central Committee expresses the will of the party collective. Once it has grasped this, the Opposition will cease to split the unity of the party and oppose the mood of the million-strong party collective.

Soviet Woman – Citizeness with Equal Rights

It is well known that the Soviet Union has achieved exceptional successes in drawing women into the active construction of society. Even our enemies do not dispute this fact. Soviet woman is in her country a citizeness with equal right. Our government has given women access to all spheres of creative activity, and at the same time has guaranteed all the conditions necessary for woman to fulfil her natural duty – to be a mother, the educator of her children and the mistress of her home.

Soviet legislation recognised from the very first that maternity is not a private matter, but the social duty of the active and equal citizeness. The constitution has strengthened this position. The Soviet Union has thus solved one of the most important and complex problems: how to introduce female labour into all spheres of the economy without women having to sacrifice maternity. Great attention was paid to the organisation of public canteens, kindergartens, pioneer camps, children's playgrounds and creches – to those institutions which, as Lenin wrote, would in practice liberate woman and in practice make her more equal with man. More than seven thousand medical centres for women and children were set up in the USSR, one half of this number in the rural areas. Over twenty thousand creches were established. One should remember that in tsarist Russia in 1913 there were only nineteen creches and twenty-five kindergartens, and that these were maintained not at government expense but by philanthropic organisations.

The Soviet government proffers an ever increasing amount of help to the mother. Women receive benefits and a paid holiday at the time of pregnancy and birth. They are able to return to their old job when this leave comes to an end. Single women and women with large families receive government benefits to help them bring up and provide for their children's welfare. In 1945 the government paid out more than two billion rubles in such benefits. In the RSFSR alone more than ten thousand women have the honorary title of "mother-heroine", and over 1,100,000 women have been awarded the order of "motherhood glory" and the "medal of motherhood".

Soviet women have justified this trust and care on the part of the government. They showed great heroism in the time of peaceful, creative work before the war and during the years of armed struggle

against the fascist invaders, and now they are in the forefront in the work of carrying out the glorious tasks of the new five-year plan. Many sections of industry where female labour is predominant are ahead in plan fulfilment. The Soviet peasant women have rendered great services, bearing the main burden of agricultural work on their shoulders through the war years. Our women have mastered professions which for centuries have been considered the province of the male. We have women working as machine operators, mechanics, turners, tool-setters; we have working women with high qualifications in charge of complex machinery. On a level with men, the women of the Soviet Union are making progress in science, culture and art; they have established a prominent position in education and the health service.

In a country where thirty years ago, out of 2,300,000 working women, 1,300,000 were servants in the towns and 750,000 were landless peasant women in the villages, and in a country where there were hardly any women engineers or scientists and where women working as teachers had to accept conditions insulting to their human dignity, there are now 750,000 women teachers, 100,000 women doctors and 250,000 women engineers. Women constitute one half of the student body at higher educational establishments. More than 30,000 women work in scientific laboratories, 25,000 women have higher degrees, 166 women have been awarded the honorary title of laureate for outstanding achievements in science and labour. Women in the land of the Soviets are realising their political rights in practice. In the Supreme Soviet of the USSR alone there are 277 women deputies. 256 women have been elected to village, urban, regional and republican organs of Soviet power.

It is well known there was never a so-called women's movement, and that the Russian woman did not go through the phase of feminism and the struggle with the suffragists. She never viewed the battle for equality as being separate from the basic task of liberating her country from the yoke of tsarism, because she understood that the woman's question is inseparable from the social and political problems of which it is a part. . . .

In all countries women are now struggling heroically for their rights, meeting sharp resistance from their male competitors and in particular from bourgeois governments. But nowhere in the world have they been able to achieve those rights which all citizenesses of the Soviet republic exercise naturally. Women in the Soviet Union do not have to

demand from their governments the right to work, the right to an education and the protection of maternity. The state itself and the government draw women into work, opening wide all the avenues of social endeavour to them, assisting and rewarding mothers.

At the time of the Nazi invasion Soviet women and the women of the democratic countries were filled with the conviction that an unremitting struggle with fascism had to be waged. Only in this way, they believed, could they free the world from the danger of new wars. The fight for democracy and a stable peace, and the struggle against reaction and fascism, are still the fundamental task today. The isolation of women from the fundamental questions, attempts to lock women in "purely women's" feminist organisations, can only weaken the women's democratic movement. Only the victory of democracy guarantees women's equality.

We, the women of the land of the Soviets, devote all our energies to creative labour and to the fulfilment of the glorious projects of the five-year plan, knowing that in this way we are strengthening the world's stronghold of peace – the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. At the same time we must keep a sharp watch on the intrigues of the reactionaries, to expose their plans and schemes and their attempts to divide the ranks of democracy. The unity of all democratic forces is our truest weapon in the struggle against reaction and in the fight for peace and freedom in the world.

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Index

RUSSIAN HISTORY/WOMEN'S STUDIES

Alexandra Kollontai
Selected Writings

Alexandra Kollontai—the only woman member of the Bolshevik central committee and the USSR's first Minister of Social Welfare—is known today as a historic contributor to the international women's movement, and as one of the first Bolshevik leaders to oppose the growth of the bureaucracy in the young socialist state.

Her *Selected Writings* discuss the social democratic movement before the First World War, the history of the Russian women's movement, and the debate between "feminist" and "socialist" women; the effects of the war on European socialism; the revolution; the part played by women in the revolutionary events; the early manifestations of bureaucracy and Kollontai's role as spokeswoman for the "workers' opposition"; and morality, sexual politics, the family, and prostitution. It also includes writings from her later life as a Soviet official.

Each section is introduced by a commentary in which Alix Holt explains the background and critically sets Kollontai's unique life-work in its historical and biographical contexts, demonstrating both its necessary limitations and its extraordinary range.

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